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SUICIDE

STUDIES ON ITS PHILOSOPHY, CAUSES, AND PREVENTION

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BY

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DEDICATION.

The author of this work dedicates it to the

MEDICO-LEGAL SOCIETY

OF NEW YORK

whose successful efforts at medical, legal, and social reform reflect honor on itself and lasting benefit on the community.

PREFACE.

SUICIDE is a question partly social, partly medical; hence it may with propriety be discussed in a volume intended for intelligent readers generally.

By the term suicide is meant the intentional destruction of one's own life. It embraces all who kill themselves purposely, or, as the legal phrase expresses it, "with malice aforethought," whatever the cause of the act or the mental state of the agent. It excludes deaths from acts or lines of conduct which, howsoever much opposed to self-preservation, are not intended to destroy life. Although in judging examples belonging to this class it is customary to declare them suicidal, yet such declaration is rather a moral estimate of conduct tending to death than a technical deliverance as to the character of the death itself.

Fundamentally, suicide has reference to the individual viewed in the two-fold aspect of his social and personal life. It presupposes two necessary conditions: (1) Moral and physical impressions derived from without; (2) on the part of the recipient of these impressions, a nervous impressibility, which not only magnifies and distorts

them, but which gives them a dangerous power to affect his happiness.

Hence the causes of suicide naturally fall under two main divisions, the external or social, and the internal or personal.

The external or social order of causes is subdivisible into general and special causes of suicide. The general causes exist everywhere and under all circumstances. They have their source in extravagant religious and moral beliefs. The special causes comprise all those various circumstances and accidents which result from the relations of individuals to each other in society,—hereditary tendency, education, literature, financial losses and embarrassments, love troubles, and the rest. The personal causes include ill health, insanity, and the important factor, temperament.

These causes are set forth in the following pages, to which three chapters are added on the prevention of suicide.

The author has much pleasure in thanking the following gentlemen for valuable assistance rendered during the progress of this work: Dr. Farr, Register-General of England; Mr. T. H. Williams, ex-librarian of the Athenæum Library, Minneapolis, Minn.; and Mr. William Keutgen, of Stapleton, Staten Island, N. Y.

STAPLETON, STATEN ISLAND, N. Y.,
June 25, 1881.

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BOOK I

EXTERNAL OR SOCIAL ORDER OF CAUSES

PART FIRST.

RELIGION, MORALS, AND LAWS OF ANTIQUITY IN RELATION TO SUICIDE.

CHAPTER I.

The Doctrine of Continuity.

At the source of religious faith is a belief in the continuity of the present life with the life to come, in accordance with which departed souls have the same rank and pursuits in the spirit world that they enjoyed in the flesh. From this belief grew the custom of funeral sacrifice; for if the warrior soul is to pursue his calling in the spirit land, he must have his bow and arrow, his spear, shield, and horse; and if his domestic retinue there is equal to his earthly rank, he must be accompanied by his friends, wives, and slaves.

It is with the human element of funeral sacrifice that we are concerned while attempting to illustrate the influence of the belief in question on the practice of suicide. We shall not dwell on its earliest stage, because physical force was then used to compel the appointed human victim to the sacrifice. Still, a few examples of this stage may be given, if only to show the beginning of a custom, which, at a later period, and mainly through priestly sanction, merged into a widespread and volun-

tary sacrifice of human life.[1] Among European barbaric tribes, the Scythians,[2] the Crestonœi,[3] and the Scandinavians[4] interred dead kings with their living widows and chief officers of state. In Asia the Siberians slew royal widows at the tombs of their lords. When a chief of the Kayans of Borneo died, his slaves were dispatched to do him service in the spirit world, having been previously admonished to take good care of their master after joining him, to tend and shampoo him when indisposed, and to obey all his commands.[5] In North America the favorite wives of the chief of the Natchez tribe of Indians were killed at his grave, as were also the husbands of the daughters of the sun. In some instances,—the Tartar tribes of Asia, the Mexican tribes, and those of Lovango and Congo in Africa,—the relicts of deceased chiefs made voluntary sacrifices of their lives at the tombs of their respective lords.

The gradual transition from forced to voluntary funeral sacrifice can be traced in the history of the rite in Figi. At first the wives of dead Figian warriors, dressed and decorated as though for a great festival, were forcibly strangled on their graves. Later, physical force gave place to moral persuasion: "The Figian widow was worked upon by her relatives with all the pressure of persuasion and of menace; she understood well that life to her henceforth would mean a wretched existence of neglect, disgrace, and destitution; and tyrannous custom, as hard to struggle against in the savage as in the civilized world, drove her to the grave."[6]

It is at this stage of human funeral sacrifice that we

[1] See Tylor, *Prim. Cult.* London: 1871, vol. i, p. 413, *seq.*

[2] Herod., l. iv. [3] *Ibid.* l. v.

[4] Bartholinus, *De Causis Contemptæ a Danis adhuc Gentilibus Mortis*, l. ii, c. x.

[5] Marco Polo, b. iii, ch. xx. [6] Tylor, *op. cit.*, vol. i, p. 415.

find it prevailing among the twice-born castes of the Aryan settlers in Hindustan. The Aryan immigrants into the Punjaub, like many other semi-civilized communities, gave widows into the keeping of their deceased husband's kinsmen, whose duty it was to maintain them for the rest of their lives, the code of Menu forbidding them a second marriage. The footing of entire dependence on which they were thus placed could be made agreeable or the reverse, according to the disposition of their guardians. Some widows lived happily enough; the majority had but a sorry lot, being taunted with their helpless state, or in numberless other ways made to feel that they were mere objects of the charity of their kinsmen. "There is no grief," writes a Hindu widow who lately committed suicide with opium, "no grief greater * * * than that of a Hindu widow. I was only fourteen years and five months old when I was married, and am now only eighteen. I see no reason for suffering distress of mind any longer. Why has God made me a woman, and why should I suffer so much? I have not known happiness for a single day since my marriage, and I am, therefore, giving up my life."[1] That this is no mere sentimental wail is shown by the observations of Williams. "Widows," he says, "never marry again, not even if their boy-husbands die, leaving them widows at the age of six. A woman is supposed to be sacramentally united to one husband, and belongs to him for ever. Every town, every village, almost every house, is full of widows who are debarred from all amusements and converted into household drudges. They often lead bad lives. * * * They would often cheerfully give themselves up to be burned alive, if the law would let them. The spirit of Sati still survives."[2]

[1] Brooklyn (N. Y.) *Independent*, April 20, 1876, p. 15.

[2] *Modern India*, London, 1878.

Young widows were not seldom reproached with neglect of duty in continuing to live in the flesh, when, by a voluntary death, they were privileged to rejoin their lords in the spirit world.

To the moral pressure of such behavior, the Brahmins, after the establishment of their priestly power, added the sanction of religion. By altering a text in the Rig-Veda they obliged that sacred book to enjoin the self-sacrifice of widows.[1] They taught them that a voluntary death was their surest passport to heaven; and not alone this, but also that it atoned for the sins of their husbands, freed the latter from punishment, and opened to them the gates of Paradise. "As the snake-catcher draws the serpent from its hole," says Hindu Scripture, "so she, receiving her husband (from hell), rejoices with him." Again: "Though he have sunk to the region of torment, be restrained in dreadful bonds, have reached the place of anguish, be seized by imps of Yumu, be exhausted of strength, and afflicted and tormented for his crimes; still, as a serpent-catcher unerringly drags a serpent from his hole, so does she draw her husband from hell and ascend with him to heaven by the power of devotion."[2] Furthermore, the families and relatives on both sides of the house shared in the merit of such a sacrifice. The children were especially aggrandized by the suttee of their mother. It gave them honorable distinction in society, and rewarded daughters with superior advantages in the matrimonial market, on which account these latter were instructed from their earliest years in the glory and honor of the sacrifice. To these inducements was added the distinction of a commemorative monument after death. Williams observed such monuments everywhere on his

[1] See Appendix A.

[2] Ward, *Hindoos*, 1824, p. 376.

travels in India, and saw that they were held in marked veneration by the people.[1] Finally, to the persuasive force of all these considerations was superadded the threat of a punishment terrible in the sight of all orthodox Hindus, if the widows refused this crowning act of duty. "As long as a woman," so runs the sentence, "in her successive transmigrations, shall decline burning herself, like a faithful wife, on the same fire with her deceased lord, so long shall she not be exempted from springing again to life in the body of some female animal.[2] If, on account of the existence of any of the recognized causes of exemption from suttee—pregnancy, age under puberty, suckling a child, and improper motive,—the widow must not burn, she is bound to preserve an inviolable chastity. "If she remains always chaste she goes to Paradise, and if she does not preserve her chastity she goes to Hell."[3]

In the more general history of this rite, there are examples of solemn pacts to commit suicide on the death of a liege lord. The two Mohammedans who travelled in Southern Asia in the ninth century, state that on the accession of a native king, from three to four hundred of his followers pledged themselves by the form of a banquet of rice to burn when he died.[4] It was customary in Japan, during the seventeenth century, for the retainers of a daimio to perform hara-kiri at his death, having previously engaged themselves thereto by the solemn pact of drinking wine in his presence.[5] So in India, Hindu

[1] *Op. cit.* [2] Ward, *op. cit.*

[3] *Code of Gentoo Laws, or Ordinations of the Pundits*, translated by Halhed, London, 1777, ch. xx.

[4] Renaudot, *Account of Two Mohammedan Travellers*, London, 1733.

[5] Doolittle, *Social Life of the Chinese*, vol. i, pp. 108, 174, 192.

wives have entered into engagements of a similar kind, binding themselves to burn with their husbands should they survive them.

In general, the formal declaration of a Hindu wife to burn with her husband was postponed until his death appeared certain, or had actually taken place. Twenty-four hours were allowed for reflection, during which those widows who did not feel the necessary inspiration could decline the sacrifice for that reason. Others who did feel it, and consented, could not afterward retract without inflicting on their relatives the greatest dishonor they could suffer, loss of caste.

In the case of a dead king his nobles, in that of a lesser dignitary his retainers and friends, approached the consenting widows and went through the form of dissuading them from their resolution. That these attempts were mostly formal appears from the fact that on one occasion, when Lord Auckland, Governor-General of India in 1838, wished to pay a suitable compliment to the nobles who undertook to dissuade the wives and concubines of Maharána Juwan Singh, deceased lord of Oodypore, from suttee, he was politely informed that they would feel disgraced "by any tribute which should imply that their dissuasions had been meant for aught but decorous forms."[1] But whether genuine or not, intending suttees could always put an end to entreaty by the simple device of standing in public with loosened hair. After that, their will became law, and they themselves were reverenced as sanctified beings.

When the corpse of the husband was brought forth, his widow, breaking a branch off the mango tree, sat by its side. She next bathed, put on new clothes, and suf-

[1] *Quarterly Rev.*, quoted in *Living Age*, Boston, vol. xxxi, p. 356.

fered the barber to paint the soles of her feet. Then, at beat of drum, the neighbors gathered about. Into a hole dug in the ground were cast dry wool, and hemp, and offerings of clarified butter. At the bidding of the officiating Brahmin she then prayed, that "as long as fourteen Indrus reign, or as many years as there are hairs on her head (45,000,000, according to the sacred writers), she may abide in heaven with her husband, * * * and that by this act of merit all the ancestors of her father, mother, and husband may ascend to heaven." This prayer ended, she is decorated and supplied with food against the journey. The corpse having been lowered upon the pile of combustibles, she walks round about it seven times, lies down upon it, and is bound to it. Her son, or nearest male relative, then sets the heap on fire, and, amid the cries of the spectators, the living is consumed with the dead. The widow's behavior in the flames was closely watched by the bystanders. If she moved a limb, she was judged to have been a sinner. If, on the contrary, she kept still, she was pronounced immaculate. "Ah! what a perfect creature she was!" exclaimed all; "what a blessed *shuhu-murunu* was hers!"[1]

Not only did Hindu widows bend to the priestly admonitions urging them to the sacrifice of their lives, they actually became so infected with the fanaticism of the time that they sought death joyfully, and even contended among themselves for the honor of following their deceased lords. When the Rája Pandu died, in fulfilment of a curse pronounced upon him by a Brahmin, his wives Kunti and Madri contended together over his funeral pile for the honor of burning with him. The Brahmins,

[1] Condensed from Ward, *op. cit.*

on being appealed to, decided in favor of Madri, who was thereupon consumed by the side of her dead husband.[1]

The word suttee has been so intimately associated with widow-burning that it has grown to be identified with that mode of suicide alone. Its strict meaning is "good" or "faithful woman," and it was applied to designate all widows who committed suicide in due form and with the orthodox intention. The mode of death was not always by cremation. In the sequel to the legend which tells how Vyása raised the dead, who were slain in the war of the Máha Bhárata, out of the waters of the Ganges, suttee by drowning was the mode of death chosen by the widows. After describing the incidents preceding this stupendous miracle, the epic of the Great War goes on to say:

"Now, when these warriors had come out of the river, their widows and orphans and kinsfolk were overjoyed, and not a trace of grief remained amongst them; and widows went to their husbands, and daughters to their fathers, and mothers to their sons, and sisters to their brothers, and all the fifteen years of sorrow which had passed since the war of the Máha Bhárata were forgotten in the ecstasy of seeing each other again. Thus the night passed away in the fulness of joy; but when the morning had dawned, all the dead mounted their chariots and horses and disappeared; and those who had gathered together to behold them prepared to depart. And Vyása, the sage, said that the widows who wished to rejoin their dead husbands might do so; and all the widows went and bathed in the Ganges, and came out of the water, and kissed, one by one, the feet of Dhritarásh-

[1] Wheeler, *History of India*, vol. i, p. 64; Sleeman, *Rambles and Recollections*, etc.

tra and Gaudhári, and then went and drowned themselves in the river; and through the prayers of Vyása they all went to the places they wished, and obtained their several desires."[1]

Belief in the continuity of the present with the future life prevails in China, where, too, suicides of widows are not uncommon. The mode of death varies more than it did in Hindustan. Some use opium, others starve or drown, many hang themselves publicly, having given notice of their intention so that those who wish may be present. On the morning of the appointed day the willing victim, dressed in gaudy apparel and holding a bouquet of fresh flowers in her hand, is carried in a sedan chair to the temple erected in memory of "virtuous and filial widows." There she performs the accustomed religious rites, with burning of candles and incense. In the afternoon she returns home and hangs herself before the multitude. Suicides of this kind meet with general approval in China. They do honor to the families in which they occur. Nor are the sanctions of religion wanting. In the spring and autumn of each year they are honored by special oblations in appropriate temples, where also tablets, before which incense and candles burn, are erected to their memory.[2]

[1] Wheeler, *op. cit.*, vol. i, p. 441.

[2] Doolittle, *Chinese*, vol. i, p. 110.

CHAPTER II.

The Teachings of Brahmanism.

THOUGH great the support given to suicide by the belief examined in the preceding chapter, it was exceeded by the influence of the ideas we are now approaching.

Before entering upon this field, it will be instructive to note the general drift of philosophical speculation in ancient times, especially among Eastern peoples. The object of all such speculation was to solve the problem of the world's origin. But after many vain attempts to explain the cosmogony, speculative minds sank wearily from space to earth, where the problem of man, his origin, destiny, and relations to the present and future life, awaited consideration. In a word, from long and fruitless wrestling with the enigmas of cosmical law, thought turned to those obtruded by the moral law as manifested in the inner constitution of man. Hebrew philosophy obeyed this movement after the Mosaic era, as the Psalms of David and the utterances of the Prophets abundantly attest. Hindu philosophy did the same: during the Mañtra period of the Veda (between 1000 and 1500 years B. C.) it was cosmogenic; under the priestly rule of the Brahmins it became moral and ascetic. It was likewise with Greek philosophy: all the early Greek teachers were physicists; all the later, be-

ginning with Socrates and including Aristotle, were moralists.

The fruit of the first stage of this speculative era was some knowledge of a first cause of the universe, and a representation of this knowledge in the doctrine of Pantheism. The fruit of the second, or ethical stage, was the recognition of moral evil in the world. This recognition was followed by theories of its origin, and statements of means by which it was to be either conquered or avoided, chief among which were the doctrines of emanation and transmigration of souls.[1]

The general conception underlying the manifold attributes of Pantheism, was that of an all-pervading soul in nature. As to the attributes themselves, they were either such as appertain to a conscious, intelligent soul, or to an unconscious principle. In the latter view, prevalent among the Hindus, Brahma was the universal, abstract principle whose unfolding or manifestation is the universe. Birth was the imparting, by emanation, of a portion of this principle, this spirit, as it were, to matter; death, its release and return to its divine source.

[Belief in immortality had three stages in Hindustan: 1. Belief in a personal existence in the future state as deified men or minor deities; the living prayed to be "added to the people of eternity, the blessed." (Muir, *Sans. Texts*, vol. 28, 5.) 2. Under the Brahmin sacerdotal system, belief in the absorption of the individual in Brahma, and loss of personal identity. This, the supreme felicity, was obtained through prayer and sacrifice, without which the sinner must undergo many deaths and transmigrations. 3. A further extension of Brahmanical

[1] See, on development of this latter, Monier Williams, *Indian Wisdom*, London, 1875, p. 68.

doctrine in the Upanishads. Brahma was philosophized into the soul of the world. Brahma, the world-soul, becomes the only reality, all else being illusion, the result of ignorance.]

To hasten this return was the supreme aim of Hindu religion. The body was the chief obstacle that stood in the way. So long as its desires and passions concerned the spirit, to however slight a degree, there was no hope of this return being effected. Hence it was the supreme object of oriental mysticism to so entirely divorce soul from body, that the latter, losing conscious existence, the former would be free to occupy itself with supernatural realities, a knowledge of which was accounted the only way of direct escape from the vanities and delusions of life.

For the attainment of this end, discrimination was the first requirement. Discrimination was the beginning of knowledge, the indispensable faculty of distinguishing between spirit and matter,—of appreciating the nothingness of the one and the supreme value of the other. This faculty having been attained, the next step in the journey to eternity was emancipation of spirit from all intellectual limitations and restraints. These two steps comprised the essential parts of the scheme of *salvation by knowledge*, and were summed up in the formula: "He who knows the Supreme God, becomes God." But to know the Supreme God was to have an abiding sense of his spiritual holiness and calm,—a sense attainable by such spiritual exercises only as were ordained in the sacred writings. This was the supplement of *salvation by good works*. These exercises included prayer, almsgiving, the recital of passages from the sacred books, and other formal acts of piety of a like nature. They gently drew the spirit

away from the affairs of the body, until all desire, all feeling, all appetite being extinguished, nothing remained save a knowledge and contemplation of the supreme. "*Emancipation of the spiritual essence* is the all-absorbing inspiration of the Hindu word, whether the *emphasis* be placed on the process or the fulfilment. Of all its forms of speculation, this moral aspiration, this ascent from pain to peace, from darkness to light, from bonds to liberty, as the one imperative and the one practicable thing, is the vital substance. This is the 'life more than meat,' of the Hindu faith."[1] Having reached this pinnacle of holiness, nothing is left between the saint and final beatitude save the life of the body, and this he gladly flings away.

For all who were either unequal to the severe discipline of knowledge here described, or were excluded from it by cast, there remained the way of justification by good works, and by transmigration. "Man," said Menu, whose laws influenced the popular mind more than the Vedas, "is born according to his deeds, ignorant, dumb, blind, deaf, deformed; whoever has not done penance for his deeds, will receive his punishment at his death,"—that is, in a new birth. On emanating from Brahma, the soul passed through a series of transmigrations, and grew more and more sinful with each remove from its divine source.[2] But even from the lowest re-incarnation it could always ascend higher and higher in the heavenward scale of transmigrations, until it became fused again in the divine soul.

In the course of this all-absorbing spiritual progress, the

[1] Johnson, *Oriental Religions, India*, Boston, 1873, p. 378.

[2] St. John, *The Far East*, vol. i, p. 181. Menu, *Laws*, Sir William Jones' translation, ch. xii, § 39, *et seq.*

fate of the body was disregarded. The body, indeed, was but a mere accident in the scheme of salvation,—a vestment to be cast off when necessary, a dwelling to be abandoned at the will of its divine tenant. This was the belief acted upon by the mass of the people. It was taught by the philosophers, preached by the priests, sanctioned by the law-givers, honored in the temples of worship, and rewarded in the life to come. "A mansion with bones for its rafters and beams; with nerves and tendons for cords; with muscles and blood for mortar; with skin for its outward covering; * * * a mansion infected by age and by sorrow, the seat of malady, harassed with pain, haunted with the quality of darkness, and incapable of standing long,—such a mansion of the vital soul let its occupier cheerfully quit."[1] This is the utterance of the great law-giver himself, and its evident tendency is in favor of suicide. But his laws contain other, and perhaps more direct, sanctions of the practice. In one place he says: "As the tree leaves the bank of the river, when it falls in, or as a bird leaves the branch of a tree at his pleasure, thus he, who leaves his body by necessity or by legal choice, is delivered from the ravening shark or *crocodile* of the world."[2] To one afflicted with an incurable disease, he says: "Let him advance in a straight path toward the invincible north-eastern point, feeding on water and air, till his mortal frame totally decay, and his soul become united with the supreme." He affirms positively that a "Brahmin, who has shuffled off his body by any of those methods which great sages practised, and become void of sorrow and fear, rises to exaltation in the divine essence."[3]

[1] Menu, ch. vi, vol. vii, § 76, 77; Ward, *Hindoos*, p. 438, note.
[2] Menu, ch. vi, § 78.—30. *Ibid.*, ch. vi, § 37. [3] *Ibid.*, ch. vi, § 32.

The actual fruits of teaching such as this were profound apathy and a widespread indifference to life. It has been well remarked that "Whatever may be said about the bliss of complete union (Sayeyya) with the Supreme Spirit, the true aim of Brahmanism, pure and simple, is not so much extinction of self as extinction of personal existence, for the sake of release from the troubles of life and from the consequences of activity."[1]

Numbers of persons who felt themselves doomed to many more transmigrations in penalty for sins, and were dissatisfied with their present condition, would commit suicide in the hope of improving it by the next incarnation, for of the sinfulness of suicide there appears not to have been the slightest suspicion. "In the Râmâyana the hermit Sarabhanga, believing himself desired by Brâhma for his heaven, only defers self-immolation until Râma's coming. Having beheld this incarnation, he is content, and 'hastens to cast off his body as a serpent his slough.' He prepares a funeral pile, enters the fire, and, being burned, arises as a youth from the ashes bright as the flame."[2] Nor is this hope confined to civilized pagandom. The aborigines of Australia believe that when a black man dies his soul is re-incarnated in a white man. They express their faith in the terse and comical phrase: "Black fellow tumble down, jump up white fellow." That touch of nature which makes us all akin, and, in this instance, like the others, assumed the shape of a longing for the good time to come, suggested to a native of Melbourne the inspiring belief that, after his execution, he would "jump up white fellow and have lots of sixpences."

[1] Monier Williams, *Hinduism, in Non-Christian Religious Systems*, London, 1877, p. 84.

[2] Johnson, *Oriental Religions, India*, p. 140.

And so, too, under the influence of the same hope, west African negroes commit suicide in distant slavery in order that they may come to life again in their own land.[1]

An ancient band of Hindu ascetics called Gymnosophists,[2] or naked philosophers, had so fanatic a belief in transmigration, and were so utterly indifferent to the life of the body, that they generally committed suicide on the approach of old age. With them, to await a natural death was disgraceful, to anticipate it honorable.[3] The Hindus of the present day, attacked by painful or tedious illnesses, or suffering distress of one kind or other, —loss of friends, relatives, money, possessions, character, and the like,—seek the Ganges or some other sacred river and drown themselves. Would-be suicides who hesitate on the brink of the river are pushed in and compelled to drown.[4] Heber alludes to the great frequency of suicides in India, more especially among the women, for trivial reasons, one of which not infrequently is that their blood may lie at an enemy's door. Death in the Ganges is to all castes the surest passport to Heaven.[5] Vows are made to die there in exchange for some specified boon in the next incarnation, such as honors, riches, health, or happiness. Many mendicants plunge in after making such vows. Many philosophers (dundees) do likewise, when their animal propensities rebel against the restraints imposed upon them by the self-denying rules of their order.[6]

Belief in the special purifying quality of fire is the reason why so many Hindus, particularly those among them who are diseased, prefer it as a means of suicide. Por-

[1] Tylor, *op. cit.*, vol. ii, p. 5. [2] Boyle, *Dict.*, Art. Gymnosophists.
[3] Quint. Curt., ch. ix. [4] Ward, *op. cit.* [5] *Ibid.*
[6] Ward, *op. cit.*, p. 390, and note to p. 348.

phyry remarks that "they throw themselves on the fire, that thus the soul may be separated in greater purity from the body, and that they may gain a high commendation."[1] It is a favorite mode of suicide among lepers, who, if they suffer themselves to die of their disease, reappear as lepers in the next transmigration, but are reborn in healthy bodies if they burn themselves to death.

Self-decapitation was another mode of suicide among the Hindus. Tradition relates that "there existed formerly at a village near Nudeeya, an instrument which was used by devotees to cut off their own heads. It was made in the shape of a half moon, with a sharp edge, and was placed at the back of the neck, having chains fastened at the two extremities. The infatuated devotee, placing his feet in the stirrups, gave a violent jerk, and severed his head from his body."[2]

Pilgrims from all quarters of the land journeyed to the sacred rivers with the resolve to drown themselves, believing that such a mode of death afforded them a certainty of eternal salvation. They usually tied themselves between two large pots and waded into the stream. When they had waded far enough they let the pots fill and were submerged by their weight.[3] Sleeman describes the suicide of an old gentleman which he seems to have witnessed with his own eyes. Procuring a boat he sailed out into midstream and loaded himself with sand. Then, when all was ready, he stepped into the water and was drowned.[4]

It was customary at one time for a few of the wildest fanatics who resorted to the procession of the idol of

[1] *De Abstinentiâ*, l. iv.
[2] Ward, *op. cit.*, p. 392.
[3] Williams, *loc. cit.*
[4] *Rambles*, etc., p. 345.

Juggernaut, to throw themselves under the wheels of the approaching car, and perish in the calm assurance of eternal bliss. Victims of this kind of fanaticism, never very numerous, are now unknown. Indeed, self-immolation has never been in keeping with Vishnu worship.[1] Official returns put this beyond doubt. Most of the deaths that were apparently sought in moments of religious frenzy were really accidental; of the rest the great majority occurred among the sick and disabled, who deliberately sought this means of ending their troubles.[2]

Two other modes of religious suicide were comparatively common in India until quite recently. The first in order of mention is called *Bhrigu-pata*, meaning "to throw one's self from a precipice." It was committed by oldest sons, whose mothers, dreading barrenness, had vowed their first-born male child to Mahadeva, who, under the form of Mahākāla, is the god of destruction. Two localities were specially noted for this mode of death. One is the sand hills in the Satpura range, the other the rock of Girnār in Kathiawar.[3] The second of the modes of suicide just referred to, is by Samādh, or burial alive, and was that practised by Sannyāsē or holy Brahmins, who, by a life of contemplation, had abstracted their souls from all connection with their bodies. The tombs of these suicides are resorted to by pilgrims from all parts of India.

As might naturally be supposed, there are other besides religious or pious motives for suicide in India, and among these the most common, until a late period, was Dharnā.

[1] Hunter, *Orissa*, p. 134. Moore, *Full Inquiry into the Subject of Suicide*. London, 1790, vol. i, p. 134.

[2] Williams, *Modern India*. London, 1878.

[3] Williams, *loc. cit.* See also *ibid.*, p. 50, *et seq.*, for an account of a Samādh, too long for transcription here.

By Dharnā was meant the practice of sitting at the door of a debtor, without food or drink, until the debt was paid. If the creditor died during this process, which was likely to happen from starvation, if prolonged, he had at least the satisfaction of believing that public opinion would avenge him on his enemy. Of course, if the suicide happened to be a Brahmin, a terrible responsibility thereby fell upon the debtor and his household.

CHAPTER III.

The Teachings of Buddhism.

BRAHMANISM had been in existence some two thousand years as a powerful and intricate religious system, when Gautama appeared. He came as Buddha, the enlightened one, to teach men the way of true happiness. Contending against the Brahminical doctrine of necessary evil, he taught that evil was coëxtensive with existence only, and was perpetuated by what made existence possible,—desire. So long as the spirit desired, transmigration was its only future; for desire necessitated a chain of incarnations in which substance (the soul) continued, while form (the body) alone changed.

The Brahmin and Buddhist doctrines relative to a future state differed in one important particular. The former taught, in keeping with its fundamental tenet of necessary and ineradicable evil, that even when the soul had attained Brahma, it must return, after œons of years, to the material world, and there begin anew its weary round of transmigrations. Buddhism, on the contrary, insisted that the attainment of Nirvâna was the soul's final rest, since it was also the total extinction of desire, on which the personal life of the soul depends.

Wherever Buddhism has spread—and it has been al-

most wholly a missionary religion, never having obtained a foothold among the Hindus, to whom it was first preached—it has inoculated the masses with a desponding view of the world, and a contempt of life only conceivable when viewed in connection with its pessimist doctrines. "The Brahman," says an eloquent writer, "was anxious to emancipate himself as soon as possible from the world of phantoms, that he might revert to his original oneness with divinity. The Buddhist, driven to desperation by witnessing the same calamities, was no less anxious to escape, but was content if he could ultimately pass beyond the verge of that enchanted circle which was fatal to his peace, and so attain to non-existence. Both alike gave utterance to the grief which preyed upon their inmost being. But the Buddhist sorrowed as the man who has no hope; and his philosophy is therefore the philosophy of despair." [1]

Such has been the effect of Buddhism in China, where it appeared on its passage northward about the middle of the first century before Christ, and where, after much effort, it was accepted by a large majority of the Chinese people. Ever since, suicide has been frequent among them. On this point the testimony of travellers is unanimous. A native writer who clearly demonstrates the tendency of Buddhism to destroy the principle of self-conservation, gives the following among other instances of its effect on his own countrymen. "The votaries of Buddha," he says, "may be often seen going on a pilgrimage to the summit of a bluff, whence, after prayers, they precipitate themselves into the abyss beneath. Others of them purposely waste their lives in excesses. Still others offer their necks to the executioner, exclaim-

[1] Hardwick, *Christ and Other Masters*, London, 1863, p. 234.

ing: 'Strike, we die gladly, prepared to join Fo (Buddha) and enter with him into his felicity.'"[1]

For all their contempt of death, however, the Chinese discriminate between what they call honorable and what they call dishonorable suicides.

Among honorable suicides they include Chung-Shan, Tsze-Foo, and Tee-Foo.

Chung-Shan comprises all servants or officers of state who refuse to survive a defeat in battle or an insult to the reigning sovereign. After the capture of the Bogne Forts, in the first war between Great Britain and China, Kwan Tai-pose made himself and family illustrious by committing suicide. After the taking of the Takoo Forts in 1860, many mandarins killed themselves. When it was shown at the Conference of Pekin, in 1861, that there was no other resource for the Chinese except submission to the foreign force marshalled outside the walls, one of the mandarins left the meeting to commit suicide. Sometimes the wives of officials take their lives under similar circumstances, and for so doing are honored in the temples.[2]

Tsze-Foo designates affectionate wives whose love for their husbands is so great that they refuse to survive them.[3] It is a practice met with in the eastern provinces of Fokien more especially, the customary mode of death being hanging. It is simply a form of suttee, which the local authorities are apparently unable to prevent. It also includes women who will not survive the disgrace of ravishment, and affianced girls whose intended husbands

[1] *Hist. des Voyages*, quoted in Buonaféde, *Hist. Crit. et Philos. du Suicide*, Paris, 1841, p. 14.

[2] Gray, China, *A History of the Laws, Manners, and Customs of the People*, London, 1878, vol. I, chapter xiii.

[3] Gray, *loc. cit.*

die before the nuptial day. The devotion of these girls is wont to be publicly recognized in memorials from the governor of the province to the throne, several of which have appeared in the *Pekin Gazette*, and exhibit, as has been well observed, a curious phase in the native character.[1]

Tee-Foo is the term applied to faithful husbands who destroy themselves in war or rebellion, and to fathers who commit suicide with their daughters.

Besides the foregoing, there are other recognized causes of honorable suicide in China, such as insolvency, personal insult or dishonor, and the likelihood of being punished for some capital offence. In the latter case, if the criminal be a high functionary, the emperor takes an official part in promoting his suicide, by sending him a silken cord as intimation that he should strangle himself. This he proceeds to do, at the same time expressing gratitude to his majesty for allowing him a mode of death, which, unlike beheading, the customary form of capital punishment in China, saves his body from mutilation. Officers of inferior rank are not so favored. They must submit to the blow of the headsman unless they forestall it by suicide, which, in such case, must be committed without imperial intimation or sanction.[2]

The suicides that are considered dishonorable in China, are such as proceed from gambling,[3] quarrelling,[4] revenge, jealousy,[5] and immorality.

From China, the religion of Buddha spread to Japan,

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 340. [2] Doolittle, *Chinese*, vol. i, pp. 110, 111.

[3] Frequent among men and women; the latter killing themselves from fear of their husbands' displeasure, the former from despair at their heavy losses.

[4] Said to be the most common cause of suicide in China.

[5] Frequent, owing to the institution of polygamy.

where its influence was sooner or later felt in the same general disregard of life and sanctification of death. To this influence Charlevoix traces those scenes in which multitudes of Japanese, actuated by a common fanaticism, exultingly seek a voluntary death. "Nothing is more common," he remarks, "than to see boats filled with fanatical worshippers lining the shore, who weight themselves with stones and plunge into the sea, or scuttle their vessels and sink with them beneath the waves, all the while pouring forth glad hymns to their idols. A crowd of spectators stand looking on, praise them to the skies, and entreat their blessing before they disappear. The votaries of Amida immerse themselves in caves having only one small breathing hole and barely sitting room, where they quietly await death by starvation. Others plunge into sulphur pits, invoking their gods, and entreating them to graciously accept the sacrifice of their lives."[1]

The calm deliberation of Japanese suicides is remarkable: "Once a Japanese has made up his mind to quit this life for a better one, he passes several nights without sleep, and surrounded by those of his friends to whom he has confided his intention. Discourses on contempt of life, varied by public harangues on the one absorbing subject of his thoughts, fill up the remainder of his days. At the approach of the appointed hour, he summons his family and friends. Choosing from among them such as are willing to die with him,—generally a goodly number,—he partakes of a funeral banquet and expires."[2]

The premeditation so evident in this example was a feature common to all heathen suicides, as was likewise

[1] *Hist. du Japon*, t. ii, pp. 69, 70.

[2] Charlevoix, *Hist. du Japon.*

the custom of summoning friends to be present at the last scene. Sometimes the intending suicide was subjected to a show of restraint, but more often the efforts of friends were limited to arguments which were merely formal and of no effect.

From their earliest years the Japanese are taught the inanity of existence, the fleeting nature of all things, and the uselessness of trying to improve their own or the general lot. Their school-teachers have a peculiar form for conveying these lessons to their pupils. It is called the "Irova," and is a kind of alphabet giving the fundamental signs of the Japanese language, grouped in four lines, which have been made into verse, the first word "Irova" giving its name to the alphabet. "As nearly as I can reproduce the sense of the rhyme," says M. Humbert, "it is this:

"Color and odor alike pass away.
In our world nothing is permanent.
The present day has dropped into the profound abyss of nothingness.
It was but the pale image of a dream; it causes not the least regret." [1]

Further on, the same author remarks: "The Irova teaches the children in the schools that life has no more consistency than a dream, and that no trace of it remains. When the Japanese has reached a mature age, he will sacrifice his life, or that of his neighbor, with the most disdainful indifference, to the satisfaction of his pride, or to some trifling resentment. Murders and suicides are so frequent in Japan, that there are few native gentlemen who do not possess, and make it a point of honor to exhibit, at least one sword belonging to the family, that has been steeped in blood." [2] The annals

[1] Humbert, *Japan and the Japanese*, New York, 1874, p. 41.
[2] Humbert, *op cit.*, p. 127, *et seq.*

of the Japanese contain many examples of their indifference to life, and of the flimsiness of the pretexts on which they commit suicide. Allusion is not so much intended to cases of *hara-kiri*[1] done under compulsion or to escape a dishonoring execution, as to the numbers of other suicides caused by remorse, caprice, despair, and a sense of wounded pride. So punctilious are the Japanese, and so sensitive on the point of personal honor, that a fancied insult or mere breach of etiquette serves them as pretext for suicide. Humbert illustrates this peculiarity in the national temperament by the following example: "The Governor of Kanagawa, Hori-Oribé-no-Kami, exchanges with M. Heusken, the Dutch Secretary and Interpreter of the American Legation, an official correspondence which seems to him derogatory of his dignity. He complains to his chief, Ando-no-Kami, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and requests him to procure M. Heusken's expulsion from Japan. This being refused by the minister, he consults the members of his family and his friends. They all agree that his birth and his title do not permit him to survive such an affront, and the proud governor performs the *hara-kiri* in their presence."[2]

As in China, so in Japan, until within a few years past, military men and court officials were under obligations to rip themselves up, after the commission of a crime, on receipt of the imperial intimation to do so. If they rashly acted before this order came, their heirs were liable to loss of situation and property. But in general, criminals or the suspected of crime who inflicted death upon themselves, not only escaped the ruinous consequences of le-

[1] Hara-kiri, Seppuku, or belly cut, see *Griffis' The Mikado's Empire*, New York, 1876, p. 221.

[2] *Op cit.*, p. 206; Montesquieu, *Spirit of Laws*, B. vi, c. xiii.

gal proceedings, but secured public sympathy for themselves, as well as the right to bequeath property to their families. And the custom of self-execution was so general that little notice was taken of it. Sons of aristocratic families were instructed in the operation of *hara-kiri*, from an early age, and insensibly imbibed that contempt of death which is so general among all classes of Japanese.

CHAPTER IV.

The Teachings of the Stoics, Epicureans, and other Schools of Pagan Philosophy.

THE history of Western suicide until the rise of Christianity is wanting in the religious element that enters so largely into suicide in the East. There is, notwithstanding, one fundamental point of agreement between the two histories: both indicate the strivings of men to know their relation to the moral order of the universe. It is possible that the Greeks may have caught their zeal in this quest from those oriental peoples with whom they came in contact during their warlike and commercial expeditions. It is almost certain that Pythagoras[1] introduced the doctrine of transmigration from the East. The Stoic school received its most noted accessions from the same quarter. Zeno, its founder, was a native of Citium, in Cyprus. Many of his successors came from Asia. Cleanthes was from Assos in the Troad; Crysippus from Soli in Cilecia; Diogenes from Babylon; Antipater from Tarsus.[2]

The systems of philosophy that arose in Greece between the Persian invasion and the Peloponnesian war had a lasting effect. More than any other social force,

[1] Herod., II, 81, 123.

[2] Grant, *Ethics of Aristotle*, London, 1866, vol. i, p. 246.

they broke the smooth and even current of Greek religious life. They did so, on the one hand, by substituting Pantheism for nature and man-like gods; on the other, by revealing to men their antagonism, not only to the physical forces of nature, but to her moral law as well.[1]

Poetry having been one of the first vehicles of religion and ethics, it is important to inquire how it represented this antagonism which, dimly felt in the days of Homer, is so conspicuous in the tragedies of Æschylus and Sophocles.

Whilst philosophy was founding the doctrine of immutable law in objective nature, poetry was teaching a similar law in the moral world. But in seeming antagonism to the moral law stood a consciousness which now also was brought into the foreground of discussion,—the consciousness of free will. No very long experience would be needed to show that free will is limited on one side by exterior necessity, and on the other by temperament *plus* moral surroundings. Here was the dawn of a perplexing situation: a capacity in human will to put forth energy, limited on all sides by a dead wall of necessity. This antagonism between interior freedom and exterior law is the central thought of the loftiest Greek tragedy, though of the two great tragic poets of Hellas, Æschylus presents it in its least mitigated form. In the Prometheus, especially, marked stress is laid on the antagonism between proud, self-righteous man and law, or destiny, as represented in the moral order of the universe. In his contemporary and survivor, Sophocles, the same thought predominates, but the idea of a reconciliation begins to appear. Human nature is no longer shown to be proud

[1] Müller, K. O., *Hist. of Lit. of Ancient Greece*, London, 1847, p. 239. Grant, *op. cit.*, vol. i, p. 46. Croker, *Christianity and Greek Philosophy*, New York, 1870, ch. xv.

and defiant like Prometheus, but weak and erring like Œdipus, Creon, Ajax, and like them, too, bearing the penalty of conscious or unconscious guilt.

One striking consequence of this nascent antagonism was a depressing melancholy. Despite the natural cheerfulness of the Greeks, their poets, philosophers, and historians abound in allusions to the wretchedness of this life. "The very birth of man is a calamity,—a birth unto death."[1]

> "Of all the dreams of bliss that are,
> Not to be born is best by far;
> Next best, by far the next for man
> To speed as fast as speed he can,
> Soon as his eyes have glanced on earth,
> To where he was before his birth."[2]

"He whom the gods love dies early." "Man has tears to shed over the babe new-born, but has to bear the dead to the grave with joy and good wishes." Such are a few of the many expressions of this sadness which impelled men to "praise the dead which are already dead, more than the living which are yet alive."

As Greek thought drew away from physics, it became more and more intent on moral problems, in their practical bearings more especially. And the moral problem which seemed to call most urgently for solution was this, how happiness could be obtained under the new revelation. In due time the answer came. It said that the antagonism between free will and necessity, of which man was conscious, proceeded from himself, and would cease when he subjected himself to nature, and followed a rule of conduct in accordance with supreme reason as manifested in the moral law of the universe. One of the

[1] Heraclitus of Ephesus. [2] Sophocles in *Œdipus at Colonos*.

first things required by this universal moral law was submission of individual wills to the supreme will of the world. "All things are fruit to me, O Nature, which thy seasons bring."[1] "Do not ask to have things that are made by nature made according to your wishes, but wish to have them made as they are made."[2] "Freedom is not procured by full enjoyment of what is desired, but by controlling the desire."[3]

The necessity of submitting human will to the supreme law in nature was especially emphasized by the Stoics. They traced unhappiness to two main sources: the desires and emotions. By the former we are made the sport of fortune; by the latter we become subject to the weaker side of our own nature. He who would be happy must rise superior to personal influences, love virtue for its own sake, and, above all else, submit to the divine government as revealed in the order of nature, and desire nothing but what must come to pass independent of his wishes.[4] For the attainment of this submissive frame of mind, reason is the supreme guide. By following its "white light," and keeping clear of entanglements, men would secure "that imperturbable serenity of mind without which no happiness is possible."[5]

The Stoics held that reason is a divine particle in man, a fragment of the great world-soul given him at birth, and taken from him at the end of all things. The lot of souls in the interval between their escape from the dead and that universal conflagration which was to prepare a new order of life, was one of the points disputed in their school. Cleanthes, the successor of Zeno,

[1] M. Antoninus. [2] Epictetus. [3] *Ibid.*

[4] Zeller, *Stoics, Epicureans, and Sceptics*, translated from the German by Oswald J. Reichel, London, 1870, p. 315.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 220.

believed they would all live through the interval, while Crysippus, who came next in succession, held this as the privilege of the wise alone. But to whichever side the preponderance of opinion leaned, all parties were agreed that death is a law of our being, not a punishment for sin. *Lex non pœna mors*, is an aphorism on which the Stoics dwelt with emphasis. In their view death, far from being an enemy, is a friend that opens to every soul a way of escape from the prison-house of the flesh and the ills of life. It reduces the body to its primitive elements, and either annihilates the soul or ushers it into regions of rest. "Why," exclaims Seneca, "should I grieve for one who is either happy or nothing. To lament the lot of the happy is envy; to lament that of a nonentity is madness."[1] Socrates, too, declares that death either extinguishes the soul or frees it from the thraldom of the body.[2]

The union between body and soul was effected in order that the soul should be furnished with the necessary means for fulfilling the law of its being. Should, however, any stubborn obstacle—whether in the individual himself or his surroundings—prevent the soul from fulfilling this law, then it might sever the union; then suicide was not merely a reasonable act, it was the noblest expression of moral freedom.[3]

In the final judgment on this issue, Reason, the God in man,[4] must be guide; and under its direction every true disciple of the Stoa was expected to embrace death "when no higher duties bound him to life."[5] The Stoics argued this matter in all seriousness. "To a reasonable

[1] *Consol. ad Polyb.* [2] Phœdo. [3] Zeller, *op. cit.*, p. 317.

[4] Epictetus (*Diss.*, I, 14, 15, 18) and Cicero allude to Reason as the God in man.

[5] Zeller, *loc. cit.*

creature," says Epictetus, "that alone is insupportable which is unreasonable; but every thing reasonable may be supported. Stripes are not naturally insupportable. How so? See how the Spartans bear whipping after they have learned that it is a reasonable thing. Hanging is not insupportable; for as soon as a man has taken it into his head that it is reasonable, he goes and hangs himself."[1] In another place he counsels his disciples to submit to events—insults, slights, imprisonments—which are not matters of choice with them, "just so long as Reason requires them to remain in the body."[2] "God be thanked," says Seneca, "that no one can be forced to live longer than he desires."[3] (Agamus Deo gratias, quod nemo in vita teneri potest.) Nay, when Reason consents, and the fitting time has arrived, the wise man should commit suicide even though he be happy. "But it is often the duty of a wise man to depart from life when he is thoroughly happy, if it is in his power to do so opportunely."[4] Still, the standing rule was that, "He in whom there are many things which are in accord with nature, his duty is to remain in life; but as to the man in whom there either is or appears likely to be a preponderance of things contrary to nature, that man's duty is to depart from life."[5]

Cato's suicide was in complete accord with the sentiments here put into his mouth by Cicero. Determined not to owe his life to Cæsar, the legality of whose power he would never admit, he seized the opportunity afforded by the fall of Utica to put an end to himself. Plutarch's description of this tragic event is worth quoting, if only in part.

[1] *Diss.*, B. i, c. 11, § 1, Mrs. Carter's translation, London, 1758, pp. xviii, xix, introduction.

[2] *Ibid.*, B. i, c. 29, § 5. [3] *Ep.*, 12, 10.

[4] Cicero, *De Finibus*, l. iii, § xviii. Cicero, *loc. cit.*

"Now the birds began to sing, and he again fell into a little slumber. At length Brutus came back and told him all was quiet in the port. Then Cato, laying himself down, as if he would sleep out the rest of the night, bade him shut the door after him. But as soon as Brutus was gone out, he took his sword and stabbed it into his breast." His friends, hearing a noise, rushed into his chamber, and beholding him weltering in his blood, summoned a physician. "The physician went to him, and would have put in his bowels, which were not pierced, and sewed up the wound; but Cato recovering himself, and understanding the intention, thrust away the physician, plucked out his own bowels, and tearing open the wound, immediately expired."[1] When Cæsar heard of his death, he exclaimed: "Cato, I grudge you your death, as you have grudged me the preservation of your life." Since that famous eulogy was spoken, many praises have been uttered over so signal an example of Stoic pride and contempt of death. "Thou givest," says one panegyrist, "a noble lesson to mankind. How much superior in the opinion of all honest men is dignity without life to life without dignity."[2] "Behold," says another, "a spectacle on which the Deity may gaze attentively—a brave man combating adversity. Jupiter can behold nothing on earth more illustrious than a Cato. Must not the gods welcome the return of their favorite to them, who has escaped from earth by so memorable and laudable an exit?"[3]

Among all the Stoics, whether Greek or Roman, Seneca

[1] *Lives of Illustrious Men*, Clough's translation. Boston, 1876, p. 576. *Life of Cato the Younger.*

[2] Val. Maxim., l. iii, c. ii.

[3] Seneca, *De Providentia*, c. ii. In ch. vi. of this treatise occurs the famous passage in which God is represented as counselling suicide.

was preëminent as an advocate of suicide. He did not content himself with reserving it for desperate emergencies; he advised it for almost any evil. "Does life please you?" he says, "live on. If it does not, go whence you came. No large wound is required; a mere puncture will set you free."[1] The same remedy is recommended for mental trouble,[2] and for the infirmities of old age.[3] Referring to the latter subject, he says: "My own determination is not to relinquish old age whilst it leaves me entire in my better part. But when it impairs my understanding and faculties, when it leaves me a mere breathing machine, I will hasten out of the rotting and tottering structure." Extreme destitution and the tyranny of a despot not only justify suicide, but actually enjoin it on the fitting occasion. Not, indeed, that a philosopher should kill himself to escape suffering. On this point Seneca, like the rest of his school, is emphatic. "I will not lay violent hands on myself through mere pain, since thus to die is to be conquered. But if I know this pain will be my perpetual companion, I will depart, not for the pain's sake, but because it will hinder me from performing my duty of life."[4]

At times, as though alarmed at the increase of suicide in his day, Seneca modifies his sentiments on the subject. He warns his friends against that prevailing weariness of life, which was partly the result of the luxury of the time, and in part of the rapacious tyranny of the emperors, and which was hurrying so many prominent men to the death of the suicide. He tells them they ought not to hate life any more than death, nor sink into that life-weariness to which many are prone, who imagine they see nothing before them but an unvarying routine

[1] *Ep.*, lxx. [2] *Ibid.* [3] *Ep.*, lviii. [4] *Ep.* lviii.

of waking and sleeping, hungering and eating. Being once afflicted with a severe illness himself, he restrained an impulse to commit suicide out of consideration for the feelings of his aged father. Responding to the appeals of his wife Paulina, who urged him to take good care of his health, he acknowledged the superior obligations of the ties of nature in the following words; "He whose affection for wife and friends is not so great as to live for their sakes, but perseveres in his intention to die, is fastidious. For even if the mind have determined on death, yet it should forego this determination for the sake of friends." [1]

The later Stoics, while continuing to maintain the principle that, under the requisite conditions, the wise man is the arbiter of his own life, moderated the doctrine of the school upon suicide by restricting the range of its application. This was especially the case with Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius, both among the most humane of Stoic moralists.

In common with the rest of his school, Epictetus held up philosophy as the rule and prop of life. With her precepts for guide, he would bear afflictions submissively, even cheerfully.[2] He could feel no sympathy with a life of murmur and discontent. "Either live contentedly," he says, "or be gone; but do not let your life be a tissue of peevish complainings. When the game palls upon children, mark how soon they give it up. Do the same with life: live so long as it is agreeable to you; take your exit when it is intolerable. The door is open; go if you do not wish to suffer; but, if you deliberately choose to stay, don't complain." [3]

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[1] *Ep.*, civ.

[2] B. I, c. xxix, § 5, Mrs. Carter's translation. London, 1807.

[3] Epict., b. I, c. xxiv, § 4; c. xxv, § 1, 3; b. II, c. i, § 3; b iii, c. viii, § 2.

Epictetus compared life to a game. A favorite comparison among the Stoics was to a banquet, the five occasions for leaving which were likened to the five excuses for committing suicide.[1] Seneca speaks of leaving life as one would retire from a banquet—when it is time.[2] The exponent of Epicurism in Cicero's treatise talks of departing out of life as out of a theatre—when it no longer pleases.[3]

While Cato approved of suicide as a means of escaping personal humiliation, and of enhancing personal dignity; while Seneca, after teaching a contempt of life and death, recommended it as a sure antidote for all life's evils, Epictetus urged it chiefly, if not exclusively, on people who are afflicted with chronic discontent. To all such, his ready answer is: "If you don't like life, you may leave it; the door is open, begone! A little smoke, though, ought not to frighten you away. Be patient awhile, and the trouble may pass."

In every quality that contributes to excellence of moral character, Epictetus was superior to his great predecessor Seneca. Obscure by birth, and soon handed over into slavery, he passed a great portion of his life in poverty and exile, yet he never forgot his duty to God and man[4]; and happy in an entire submission to the will of the Divinity, practising in all sincerity the precepts of his philosophy, he died a natural death at an extreme old age.

Marcus Aurelius said but little on suicide, and never seems to have earnestly recommended it. Notwithstanding, he is at one with the rest of his school in declaring that the wise man is the arbiter of his own life. He

[1] *Olimpiod in Phædr.*, 3; *Schol. in Arist.*, 7, b. 25,

[2] *Ep.*, lxx, 11.

[3] *De Fin.*, b. 1, § xv.

[4] *Life*, in Simpson's ed. of Enchiridion.

should live as he would desire to be living at the moment of death's assault. If this be not possible, he should quit life, and that too without thinking the quitting of it an evil.[1] He has the same dislike to the petulant man that Epictetus had, and the same remedy to offer him. To one who complains that life is not worth living because this or that intention cannot be carried out, he answers readily: "Quit life then with the same serenity as if you had accomplished it; and with good will even to those who withstand you."[2] In this and the following passage, suicide is the alternative recommended to such as are hindered from acting rightly: "Let it not be in any man's power to say truly of thee that thou art not simple, or that thou art not good; but let him be a liar whoever shall think any thing of this kind about thee; and this is altogether in thy power. For who is he that shall hinder thee from being good and simple? Do thou only determine to live no longer unless thou shalt be such, for neither does reason allow (thee to live) if thou art not such."[3] But on the whole, the tendency of his teaching is healthful. It encourages to a hopeful view of life, exhorts to a cheerful tolerance of its burdens, and admonishes to await the coming of natural death. "Wait tranquilly your end, whether it be extinction or removal to another world. Until that time comes, it is sufficient that you venerate the gods, and bless them, do good to men, and practise tolerance and self-restraint."[4]

Summing up briefly the Stoic doctrine on suicide, we find it based on the assumption that the wise man has an inborn right to sever the connection between his soul and body, when convinced that he cannot fulfil the law

[1] Marc. Aurel. *Meditations*, b. v, § 29. [2] B. viii, 47.
[3] B. x, § 39. [4] B. v, § 33; b. ix, § 3.

of his being so long as that connection is maintained. When this conviction had been reached after serious reflection (the Stoics denounced impulsive suicide as vulgar), it was accepted as the verdict of the Deity himself, and His sanction of the act of self-destruction.

It had been already an accepted rule in this matter that "No man should abandon his post in life without the orders of the Great Commander." Pythagoras was the author of this famous saying. He illustrated his position by the familiar example of the sentry who must not leave his post of duty without permission from his military superior. This parallel implies that as the sentry may be released from duty by the order of his superior officer, so may the citizen abandon life when he has "the order of the Great Commander."[1] Plato repeats and sanctions the same rule. He argues that, the body being but the instrument of the soul,[2] it would be madness to sacrifice the latter to the former. If from necessity we were reduced to the alternative of losing one or the other, we should not hesitate to declare, perish the body and let the soul be saved. But we are forbidden to sever the connection between them. The mysteries teach that Providence has placed us at our post here below, where we are bound to remain until he releases us. Continuing, he says:

"The gods take care of us, and we are their property. If one of our slaves were to kill himself without permission, would we not be wroth against him, and would we not punish him to the extent of our power? Now, we are but the slaves of God, on which account it is not surprising that we are forbidden to die before God has

[1] Cicero, *De Senectute*, xx.

[2] *Phæd.*; Xenophon, *Memorab.*, iv, 6, 8, 1, 5, 3, 12.

sent us the formal order."[1] Cicero, in his Tusculan Disputations, wherein the argument goes to prove that death is the least of evils, affirms that, "when God himself shall give a just cause, as formerly to Socrates, lately to Cato, and often to many others, certainly every man of sense would gladly exchange this darkness for that light; not that he would forcibly break from the chains that held him, for that would be against law; but walk out, like one discharged by a magistrate or some lawful authority."[2]

(With regard to the true meaning of the Pythagorean maxim, a discriminating modern writer has observed: "Pythagoras and Plato, in saying that the soul should not leave the body unless by God's permission, have meant simply that one should not abandon his post without necessity and reflection, still less if he be an useful member of society, or fill an important office. But, on the other hand, if either unendurable pains, or sure decay, or an attack of hopeless suffering make the soul feel that it is no longer of any use in the world, then this demon or god, fraction of the world Divinity, could rightly burst his chains and quit life." (*Forney, Mélanges Philosophiques*, quoted in Buonafede, *op. cit.*, pp. 63, 64.)

The Epicureans, occupied chiefly with the sensitive and emotional side of human nature, made happiness consist in freedom from pain. Pain is caused by desire; consequently the suppression of desire is the chief security for a happy life. Their ideal existence was a copy of what they conceived that of the gods to be. The Epicurean divinities dwelt apart from men, in a state of

[1] *Phædo*, 62; *Georg.*, 512; Denis, *Hist. des Théories et des Idées Morales dans l'Antiquité*. Paris, 1856, t. I, p. 110.

[2] For parallel passages see Epictetus, *Dis.*, b. i, c. 29, § 5; b. iii, c. xiii, §1; c. xxiv, § 5.

complete isolation, and took no share in human joys or sorrows. So likewise should men live for themselves alone, concerning themselves about nothing save their own comfort of mind and body. To this end they should retire from all active pursuits, from all that is proper to the soldier, the citizen, the merchant, and live in seclusion; they should suppress the natural affections and desires, the pleasures of paternity, riches, station, friendship: nay, they were forbidden all anxiety, all thought even, about the future life, whether supernatural or in the recollection of posterity.[1] Like the Stoics, Epicurus and his disciples labored hard to eradicate the fear of death, which they regarded as the great bugbear of the human species and the arch enemy of its happiness. They insisted that the soul is material and dies with the body; that death is the complete and lasting extinction of consciousness, the end of suffering and of enjoyment, —a blowing out like Nirvâna. Life is feeling; death the extinction of feeling, and nothing more.

The Epicurean wise man is, therefore, he who surrounds himself with all possible safeguards against the ills and accidents of life. Failing to secure happiness in this way, he is at liberty to retire from life itself. He could take this final step with all the more courage that his philosophy had destroyed both the fear of the gods and of a future state of punishment. As to suicide, he said, it is a matter for the private judgment of each person. Life ought to be borne until nature or some intolerable circumstance obliges its renunciation. Nature has furnished only one road into life, but many out of it. One should, of course, deliberate carefully before resorting to suicide; but having done so, and become convinced of

[1] Denis, *op. cit.*, vol. i, pp. 192, 193.

its necessity, there should be no further hesitation. The intolerable circumstance that justified suicide, in the opinion of Epicurus, is suffering. "Suffering," he declares, "is inevitable, but it is not necessary that we remain in suffering." As the advocate of Epicurism in Cicero's treatise observes, the "vigorous and lofty mind * * * anticipates pain, recollecting that the very greatest pains are terminated by death, that slight ones have many intervals of rest, and that we can master moderate ones so as to bear them if tolerable, and, if not, we can depart with equanimity out of life, just as out of a theatre, when it no longer pleases us." [1]

Thus the teachings of the two most popular schools of classic philosophy led logically to suicide, though by different routes. The fundamental question at issue between them—a question underlying all systems of theoretical morals ever since—related to the surest way of attaining the chief end of life: happiness. The Epicureans said this was to be secured by shunning all responsibilities and cultivating an easy-going, indifferent attitude of mind. So long as life could be made agreeable, it should be lived out to the end. But if political disorders, physical pain, mental distress, or any other of its ills make it a burden, one is well rid of it. The Stoics, on the contrary, advocated virtue as the chief good in life, regardless of all considerations, whether of profit here or of reward in the hereafter. "Nothing for opinion, all for conscience." [2] "He who wishes his virtue blazed abroad is not laboring for virtue, but for fame." [3] "I do not shrink from praise, but I refuse to make it the end and

[1] Cicero, *De Fin.*, l., ii, London, 1875, Yonge's translation.

[2] Seneca, *De Vit. Beat.*, c. xx.

[3] *Ibid.*, *Ep.*, cxiii.

term of right." [1] "Never forget that it is possible to be a divine man, unknown to all the world." [2] In a strain equally exalted, they repudiated the Epicurean theory that virtue ought to be practised for the pleasure it gives. Pleasure is the companion of virtuous acts, not their incentive.[3] (Non dux, sed comes voluptas.) They did not love virtue for the pleasure it gave them; quite the contrary, it gave them pleasure because they loved it.[4] In contrast to the *dolce far niente* of the Epicureans, they engaged in the practical duties of life. Their conduct in the discharge of these duties was marked by a lofty sense of personal dignity and a disdain of every thing that savored of meanness or moral weakness. Loss of wealth, friends, influence, possessions, must be endured without complaint. Fortune gave them; fortune has taken them away. They are not essential to the wise man's happiness. His main support in the ups and downs of life is a firm mind conscious of the rectitude of its aims. The Stoic was at bottom an intensely proud, self-conscious man. Strip him of all his goods, leave him naked as Prometheus himself, he would still, Prometheus-like, defy fate. But assail him with ridicule, touch his honor, threaten him with disgrace, impugn his motives, pronounce upon him a humiliating sentence of the law, and he quietly withdrew, wrapping the mantle of his wounded pride about him. Henceforth he was only concerned to arrange his exit from life with becoming dignity. This is the sentiment of personal pride in its fullest development, a sentiment common to the heathen, whether civilized or not. The Christian religion supplied its antidote in the virtue of humility.

[1] Perseus, *Sat.*, i, 45–47.
[2] Marc. Aurel., vii, 67.
[3] Seneca, *De Vit. Beat.*, c. viii.
[4] *Ibid., op. cit.*, c. ix.

The Stoics pushed this sentiment of personal pride to what might now be considered an almost blasphemous extreme. The wise man, they said, was above God in that, while God was virtuous by necessity, he was so by choice.[1] "The gods indeed can bestow the externals of riches, honors, for example, and friends; but virtue is the wise man's absolute possession; he owes it to himself alone." (Hoc quidem omnes mortales sic habent externas commoditates—a diis habere: virtutem autem nemo unquam acceptam deo retulit.) "Who ever thought to thank the gods that he is a good man," says Cicero, "as he thanks them for riches."[2]

The New Academy asserted nothing positive in regard to suicide. Cicero, brightest ornament of that school, in his formal treatise, *De Finibus*, gives the views of Platonists, Stoics, and Epicureans on the subject; but his own sentiments must be gathered from his letters written in exile. In several of these[3] he approves of suicide, and even regrets not having committed it in the hey-day of his fame when he might have left the world with an unsullied record. Notwithstanding the apparent warmth of his declarations on this point, there is some doubt as to his sincerity. It has even been hinted that he feigned a disposition to suicide in order to work upon the feelings of his friends and cause them to redouble their efforts for his recall.

The elder Pliny vaunted man's superiority to the gods in that he may die when it pleases him.[4] He eulogizes mother earth for bearing poisons which can be used to end life swiftly and pleasantly.[5] He enumerates the

[1] Seneca, *Ep.*, liii.
[2] *De Nat. Deorum*, l. ii, 86–88.
[3] L. i, ep. iii, iv; l. iii, ep. iv, vii, xix; l. iv, ep. xiii.
[4] *Hist. Nat.*, l. ii, c. vii.
[5] *Ibid.*, l. ii, c. iii.

justifiable causes of suicide, among which are included colic, headache, and strangury.[1]

The younger Pliny was deeply affected by the suicide of his friend, Cornelius Rufus, a Stoic, who killed himself to end the pains of gout. In a letter concerning that event, he calls suicide "the most mournful kind of death."[2] This expression, however, is but the natural and informal evidence of his bereavement. His description of the death of Rufus shows he did not disapprove of suicide on moral grounds.

[1] *Ibid.*, l. xxv, c. iii.

[2] L. I, ep. xii, ep. xxii; l. iii, ep. vii.

CHAPTER V.

Suicide in Pagan Greece and Rome.

THE early Greeks led such active, bustling lives, and were so imbued with religious sentiment, that suicides were rare among them. Their religious sentiment received its fullest expression in the productions of the tragic poets who were contemporaneous with the most perfect development of the national life. In these there is no attempt at a philosophy of suicide. The characters they portray claim no right of life and death over themselves. The suicides that occur among them happen in moments of despair. Ajax, awakening to a sense of his shame, leans upon his spear and dies. Jocasta, discovering the horror of her dreadful situation, hangs herself. Antigone, Hæmon, her lover, and Eurydice, Hæmon's mother, kill themselves in states of great emotion. In all these examples suicide is represented as the result of circumstances which, under Providence, deprived its victims of reason at the critical moment. It was not until long after the age of Sophocles, and then only in Roman tragedy, that sophistical reasoning was brought to bear in the delineation of suicide, and that Œdipus, in the Thebaid of Seneca, was made to claim a right to end his misfortunes by his own hand.

In Greece, the earliest historic suicides were patriotic in

their intent. King Codrus affords one example of this; Themistocles probably another.[1] Tradition says that the latter poisoned himself. It was not until the decline of her religious faith, and the rise of her schools of philosophy, that suicides to escape the ills of life became common. Against the advancing tide of skepticism Plato contended, while the great mass of the people still adhered to the old religious teaching; but the educated class either treated this teaching with contempt, or endeavored to make it square with reason. Euemerus allegorized the myths, and Palœpathus explained that they were no more than fanciful accounts of common events. To the party of unbelief belonged the Sophists. Critias, one of their number, declared that some cunning statesman had invented the gods to overawe the people. Diogenes, of Melos, threw a wooden statue of Hercules into the fire, bidding him do his thirteenth labor there. Still, while this party tore down with one hand, it built up with the other. While endeavoring to make men ashamed of polytheism, and the degrading myths and no less degrading practices that had grown up about it, they at the same time gave them the notion of a divine intelligence ruling the world according to justice. While weakening the claim of the State to regulate the lives of citizens even to their most personal actions, it supported the claim of conscience to be the guide of life. Finally, while moderating the pride of nationality, and the exclusiveness of citizenship, it proclaimed the law of universal brotherhood. The important change thus begun by the Sophists was carried on by the Cynics and completed by the Stoics. It covered one of those subjective stages of life which reappear from time to time in

[1] Val. Maxim., l. v, c. vi.

the history of society. Its aim was the cultivation of private rather than civic virtues, and the perfection of character through contemplation in preference to action. But its effect was in some respects disastrous. Gradually public affairs, left to be managed by the most venal and ignorant classes, became intolerable even to the moralists themselves,[1] while a mass of literature and doctrine grew up, which, next to the political and social influences of the time, contributed most to the spread of suicide in the age of Greek decadence.

The increase in the tendency to suicide began with the Cynics, one of whose prominent disciples, Diogenes, caused his own death by suffocation.[2] Stilpo, the favorite pupil of Diogenes, purposely drank himself to death when he began to feel the inconveniences of old age.[3] Menedemus, the successor of Stilpo in the same school, committed suicide, as did also his colleagues Onesicratus, Metrocles, and Menippus. Demonax, a moderate Cynic, ended his life because he had outlived his authority. Peregrinus, a more extreme member of the same school, burnt himself alive before a large assembly of spectators whom he had gathered together by causing his intention to be publicly announced.[4]

The Stoics, philosophic heirs of the Cynic school, were the first to erect suicide into a dogma, and to create enthusiasm for it among the Greeks and Romans.[5] Many of the Stoics committed suicide under circumstances which attest the mean regard they had for their lives. The founder of the school, Zeno, fell one day and injured his finger. Taking this accident for the divine summons

[1] Fustel de Coulanges, *The Ancient City*, Boston, 1874. pp. 470, 481.
[2] Diog. Laert., *Life of Diogenes*, xi.
[3] *Ibid.*, *Life of Stilpo*, x.
[4] Lucian, *De Mort. Peregrini.*
[5] Buonaféde, *op cit.*, p. 84.

out of this life, he cried aloud, "You want me, do you? Then I am ready," and going aside immediately, he killed himself.[1] His successor, Cleanthes, showed an equal contempt of life. Having an ulcer on his tongue, he called in his physician who prescribed fasting. By this treatment he was relieved in two days; but when he was bade renew his meals he refused, declaring that since he had gone so far on the road to death, he would feel ashamed not to finish the journey. And so, continuing to fast he died of starvation.[2]

The Cyreniac school of philosophy was the parent of the Epicurean, which substantially accepted its doctrines. Aristippus, founder of the Cyreniac school, was a dandy and voluptuary in the opinion of his day. He taught that pleasure was the supreme good, and that even virtue itself was only valuable for the enjoyment it gave. He held that one should live without regret for the past or anxiety for the future; that nothing is intrinsically just or unjust, becoming or unbecoming, but that these and all like restrictions had been imposed by arbitrary law and custom. It was his belief, moreover, that every wise man had an inherent right to choose life or death, and that when life became a serious obstacle to enjoyment it should be cast away.[3] Like nearly all schools of ancient philosophy, this one was fond of contrasting the worry of life with the peace of death. Hegesippus, one of its noted teachers, discoursed so eloquently on the latter subject that many of his hearers killed themselves. His advocacy of death was so disastrous that Ptolemy compelled him to keep silence.[4]

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[1] Diog. Laert., l. vii, p. 28.

[2] *Ibid.*, l. ii; Grant, *Aristotle*, vol. i, p. 251.

[3] Diog. Laert., l. ii.

[4] Cicero, *Tusc. Dis.*, l. i, 34; Val. Maxim., l. vii, c. ix.

Suicide was not wholly unknown in the early days of the Roman commonwealth. Many of the troops who had fought under Tarquin the Proud, and whom he afterward obliged to labor in the drains and sewers which he was constructing in the city, killed themselves on account of the degrading or irksome nature of the work. The further progress of this epidemic was stopped by Tarquin, who ordered that the body of every suicide should be nailed to a cross and publicly exposed.[1]

Two classes of suicides are especially mentioned in Roman history, one for sake of chastity, the other for sake of country. Lucretia and the Cymbrian women are the most renowned examples of the former. The self-sacrifices of Marcus Curtius and of the Decii, father and son, are the most familiar instances of the latter. Regulus is another touching example of self-devotion in the same cause.

The influences which undermined the simple faith and stern patriotism of the Romans, were, first of all, the influx of Asiatic manners and customs after their eastern triumphs, and, secondly, the introduction of the philosophies of Greece close upon the conquest of that land. The latter movement was stoutly withstood by the national Roman party, who upheld her old religious and political institutions. The newly arrived philosophers were branded as corrupters of the religion and morals of the people. They were expelled *en masse* during the consulship of Strabo and Messala, 160 years before the Christian era. Seven years later the Athenians, demurring to a tax levied upon them by their conquerors, sent a deputation to Rome to plead exemption. They chose as their representatives Diogenes a Stoic,

[1] Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, l. xxxvi ; Moore, *Full Inquiry*, vol. i, p. 246.

Critolaus a Peripatetic, and Carneades a New Academician. But the appearance of these envoys in Rome was warmly resented by Cato, and they withdrew, not, however, until after they had sown seeds of the knowledge to come.

Of all schools of philosophy, the Stoic and Epicurean did most to cultivate a tendency to suicide in Rome. The first philosophical treatise in the Latin tongue was composed by Amafinius, an Epicurean, and won over not a few converts to his teaching.[1] But the writer whose work made the Epicurean philosophy known to the largest number of educated Romans was Lucretius. In his famous exposition this author endeavored to destroy the fears of the superstitious,—dread of the gods and of death more especially,—hoping that when this had been effected there would be no other obstacle to a general acceptance of the doctrine that pleasure is the chief good in life. But despite all the force and eloquence of his reasoning, Epicurism never became popular in Rome. Voluptuaries and men of the world, students who loved the repose of their villas, espoused it, but the large body of citizens and representative men, who still preserved more or less of the old Roman spirit, treated it with indifference, and for this reason chiefly that the sentiments it expressed were repugnant to the Roman sense of duty.[2]

Among the prominent Romans who joined the Epicurean school, not a few committed suicide. The fate of Lucretius is doubtful, though it is supposed he killed himself. Diodorus cut his own throat. Cassius fell by his own dagger, after the first battle of Philippi—the

[1] Grant, *Aristotle*, vol. i, p. 279.

[2] Crutwell, *Hist. of Roman Literature*, London, 1877, p. 137.

same dagger, it is said, with which Cæsar had been slain. Pomponius Atticus, Cicero's friend, starved himself to death to be rid of a fever, and C. Silius Italicus, contemporary of the younger Pliny, procured his own death in the same way.

But the Stoic school had much greater influence in causing suicides at Rome. Its precepts were adopted by the large body of Roman citizens, to whose aspirations and wants they were peculiarly fitted. In the dark days of the empire, amid the atrocities of Nero and Claudius, Stoicism stood alone, sole representative of all that was good and great in the heathen world.[1]

Panætius taught the Stoic philosophy at Athens, 150 B. C., to several Roman students, among whom were Laelius, C. Fanucius, and Scipio, the conqueror of Carthage. These disciples, returning to Rome, spread there a taste for the new philosophy, and kept up communication with Posidonius who had succeeded their old teacher. The latter taught Cicero at Rhodes, and afterward came to Rome, where he died, B. C. 51. It was about this time that the more rapid decline of Roman greatness began. The eastern conquests, which had spread the rule of the imperial city abroad, had reacted upon the simplicity of her manners and the integrity of her morals. Then came the civil wars. The fifty years of civil strife preceding the battle of Actium had so debauched Roman character, that ere the empire was fairly established, the customs and morals of society had undergone a great change. Slaves outnumbered citizens; human life lost its value; a horde of spies and informers infested all whose virtues or eminence made them obstacles to the imperial policy. In spite of their

[1] Crutwell, *loc. cit.*

philosophy, many men despaired; a moral weariness pervaded the social atmosphere, and made itself felt in an all but universal *tædium vitæ*. There arose a passionate longing for death. On every hand it was conceded that the needs of the soul could not be satisfied in this life.[1] Men who in more hopeful times would have taken up the cause of good government, now retired from the corrupt field of politics and sought comfort either in pleasure or in the Stoic philosophy. But self-seclusion only added to the difficulties of the situation by curbing those active personal energies, the exercise of which is indispensable to moral and physical health. In vain the Neo-Platonists preached tranquility of soul. With *tædium vitæ* within, and no vent for pent-up activities on any side, this preaching could have given at best only passing comfort. Even the preachers themselves gave way to the general depression, and on many occasions swelled the ranks of those who, in large numbers, according to the testimony of Plutarch, Tacitus, Pliny the younger, and Seneca, ended their discontent by suicide. The prevailing tendency was increased, too, by the force of imitation. In the reign of Claudius it was fashionable for men to take their lives.[2] Horace speaks of the numerous contemporary suicides by precipitation from the Fabrician bridge into the Tiber.[3] Seneca, writing to Lucilius, tells him of the many people of all ages and ranks who were killing themselves.[4] Elsewhere he points to the spread of the epidemic to the lower orders, including circus performers, whom he lauds as "heroes of the circus," and ranks with the leaders of the civil wars.[5]

[1] Seneca, *Morals, Of a Happy Life.* [2] Dion., l. lx.
[3] *Sat.*, l. ii, s. iii. [4] *Ep.*, xxiv. [5] *Ep.*, lxx.

By a strange caprice of tyranny, suicide was the only honorable death open to the enemies of the empire under Tiberius, and the only profitable one for their families. The condemned who awaited the extreme penalty of the law were exposed to insult after execution; their bodies were dragged through the public streets, and their goods forfeited to the imperial exchequer. Those, on the contrary, who anticipated their sentence by suicide, were not dishonored, and their fortunes were preserved to their families as the prize of courage.[1] "That fellow has escaped from me," was the expression used by Tiberius when one killed himself in prison.[2]

Before dismissing the heathen nations of antiquity, there is something to be said respecting suicide among those barbaric tribes of northwestern Europe, whose institutions were first made known through means of Roman conquest. In the religious creed of the Norsemen, the future life was a simple continuation of the present one, and death was but the exit from one state of existence into the other. It was the spirit in which death was met that, more than any thing else, determined the fate of the vanishing soul. Men of blood and iron went to Valhal[3]; men of peace and industry descended to Helheim. Odin, immortal hero of battle-fields, reigned in the former; Balder, type of the gentle and beneficent, presided in the regions of gloom.[4] No wonder that death was a glorious event to the great Norse people, that kings like Ragnar the Dane died laughing, that a warrior, vanquished and thrown down, waited patiently until

[1] Tacitus, *Ann.*, b. vi, § xxix; Montesquieu, *Grandeur des Romanis*, ch. xii.

[2] Suetonius, *Vit. Tiberii.*

[3] Anderson, *Norse Mythology*, Chicago, 1875, p. 390.

[4] Mallett, *Northern Antiquities*, London, 1873.

his enemy brought a sword and dispatched him. These grim worshippers of storm and stress gloried in a violent death. They leaped for joy before the hour of battle.[1] The prospect of a peaceful dissolution by natural infirmity filled them with dismay. Rather than expire in their beds, they suffered their diseased and wasted bodies to be carried to the field of battle, and there left to receive a death-blow at the hand of any chance enemy. An ancient Saga mentions a lofty rock in Iceland, to which afflicted and unhappy ones resorted, and from which they leaped to "depart unto Odin," and declares: "It is useless to give ourselves up to groans and complaints, or to put our relations to needless expenses, since we can easily follow the example of our fathers, who have all gone by the way of this rock."[2] There are several of these rocks in Sweden, where they are called Attestupor (stem or family rocks). One rests on the shore of a lake in the province of Bleking. Two are found in West Gothland, and bear the name Valhal, because they stand at the supposed entrance to Odin's hall. According to tradition, another of these rocks, named Stafva Hall, was formerly the scene of wholesale suicide by Odin's worshippers.[3] Even after Christianity had put an end to these practices, the old love for a warrior's death long survived in the custom of donning armor to meet the approach of a peaceful last end.

Much of what has been here said respecting the Norsemen, applies with equal force to the Celtic tribes that inhabited the northwest of Europe and the British Isles. Like the worshippers of Odin, they awarded a happy future life to all who killed themselves, and a life of

[1] Valer. Maxim., l. ii, c. 6, p. 11. [2] Mallett, *loc. cit.*

[3] Sir William Temple, *Miscellanies*, part 11, essay 3, quoted in Mallett.

misery to such as perished of sickness or old age. "There is another world," they said, "and they who kill themselves to accompany their friends thither, will live with them there." [1]

[1] Rapin, *Introduction to the History of England*; Silius Italicus, *De Bel. Punic.*, l. II; Lucan, *Pharsal.*, I.

CHAPTER VI.

Suicide among the Jewish People.

DOWN to the beginning of the civil strife that ushered in the Jewish monarchy, only two suicides are recorded in the Old Testament, those of Sampson and of Abimelech. Sampson, to be avenged of the Philistines for his "two eyes,"[1] perished in the house he pulled down about them. He was buried "in the burial-place of Manoah his father."[2] The loss of his eyes is the only avowed motive of Sampson's suicide, though it is previously implied (23–25) that he was the Divinely appointed instrument for punishing the insolence and idolatry of the Philistines. Abimelech, while storming the tower of Thebez, was severely wounded in the head by a stone cast from the hand of a woman among the besieged. Feeling his end near, he made his armor-bearer kill him with his sword, that it should not be said a woman slew him.[3] The Scripture says his death was a Divine judgment for wickedly slaying his seventy brethren.[4]

The Hebrews were fresh from their wonderful covenant with the Lord, a mandate of which, "Thou shalt not kill," implied a prohibition against self-murder; they were

[1] *Judges*, xvi, 28.
[2] *Loc. cit.*, 31.
[3] *Ibid.*, ix, 54.
[4] *Loc. cit.*, 56.

fully alive to His presence among them as their Saviour, guide, and righteous judge, and they had not yet become contaminated by the idolatry of the Canaanites. Besides, they were instinct with the zeal of men who fight for conquest and self-preservation, a struggle so absorbing that it must necessarily have allowed them neither time nor inclination for those questionings of consciousness on which the suicidal tendency largely depends. Even during the civil commotions that preceded the monarchy, and lasted, with varying intervals of peace and prosperity, until the Babylonish captivity, it does not appear that suicide was any more frequent among them. The chief, if not the only examples of it, were Saul, his armor-bearer, and Ahithophel.

When Saul was chased and wounded by the Philistines, he called to his armor-bearer to slay him; but the armor-bearer refusing, for that "he was sore afraid," Saul "took a sword and fell upon it." "And when his armor-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he fell likewise upon his sword and died with him."[1] Saul is here represented as under the ban of the Almighty, though in another place[2] David and his followers mourn and weep over him. Ahithophel, after Absalom had rejected his counsel to march on King David, went home "to his house, to his city, and put his household in order, and hanged himself, and died, and was buried in the sepulchre of his father."[3] It is strange that a Jew should have chosen hanging as a mode of death when the Scripture says, "He that is hanged is accursed of God."[4] His suicide is the only deliberate one recorded in the Bible.

Josephus gives the following circumstantial account of

[1] I *Samuel*, xxxi, 4. 5.
[2] II *Samuel*, i, 11, 12,
[3] II *Samuel*, xvii, 23.
[4] *Deuteronomy*, xxi, 23,

this occurrence: "But Ahithophel, on rejection of his advice, got upon his ass, and rode away to his own country, Giloh [in the hills of Judah], and calling his family together, he told them distinctly what advice he had given Absalom; and since he had not been persuaded by it, he said he would evidently perish, and this in no long time, and that David would overcome him, and return to his kingdom again; so he said it was better that he should take his own life away with freedom and magnanimity, than expose himself to be punished by David, in opposition to whom he had acted entirely for Absalom. When he had discoursed thus to them, he went into the inmost room of his house and hanged himself; and thus was the death of Ahithophel, who was self-condemned; and when his relatives took him down from the halter they took care of his funeral."[1]

After the accession of King David, the religious purity of the Israelites began to deteriorate. Jehovah dwindled to a mere national deity. False gods—Baal, Ashtaroth, and Moloch—were more or less worshipped, and both the literature and the philosophy of the nation took that introspective or subjective turn to which reference has been made in a preceding part of this work. That these new influences did not materially increase the number of suicides is probably owing to two chief counteracting causes, namely, the practical, objective quality of the national mind, and the precepts of the national religion. While the former of these causes armed the Israelitish people against the depressing influences of this period of their history, the latter trained them to habits of moderation in prosperity, of resignation in adversity, and of submission to the Divine will. Of all these moral and religious

[1] *Antiq.*, l. vii, ch. ix.

influences, the Book of Job, which shows the triumph of hope over despair, of love over hate, of submission over rebellion, is a striking example. To his wife, who wished him to give up the struggle, who bade him

"Curse God and die,"

he answers in the true spirit of gratitude and submission:

"Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What! Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?"—Ch. ii, 9, 10.

The period commencing with the return from Babylon and ending with the destruction of Jerusalem and final dispersion of the Jews, is marked by several indications of a progressive decay in their morals and religion. The direct, earnest, and sustaining spirit of their faith was forsaken for an oppressive formalism. The influence of the old priesthood declined; schools of theology sprang up under the management of rabbis, or masters, who frittered away their time and mental energies in explanations of the letter of Scripture, from which extravagant conclusions were not only drawn but dogmatically enforced on believers. In the earlier stages of this theological movement,[1] covered by the Halacas,[2] the old majesty of the law could still restrain the schools. But before very long, the presumptuous spirit that early

[1] This movement took three directions: (1) adherence to the letter of tradition; (2) skepticism; (3) mysticism. The first came to be represented by the Pharisees, the second by the Sadducees, and the third by the Essenes.

[2] Paraphrases of the text of Scripture. In their due order they formed the "Mishna or Deuterosis (traditional or second law) of which the Talmud or Gemara was the commentary." Edersheim, *Hist. Jewish Nation*, Edinburgh, 1857, p. 6.

marked rabbinical utterances, began to assert itself more loudly. These utterances were boldly put forth as embodiments of the highest form of reason, which not even God himself might surpass.[1] The court of heaven was transformed into a Jewish synagogue, where the Supreme Being was represented as discussing the Bible with his angels by the indispensable aid of rabbinical decisions.[2] After entering on its second, or "Hagada" stage, Jewish theology threw off the restraints of the law and gave full play to constructive imagination. The theologians counted themselves equals of Omnipotence by the power of their knowledge. Their fiats reached even to the world of spirits, where the souls of elect and damned alike awaited them, and God himself put them in force. Study and knowledge could accomplish all things, even to the creation of new worlds.

The strange beliefs that now began to take a more or less permanent hold on the Jewish mind can be traced to the Hagada theology. The Pharisees began to teach transmigration, a doctrine, however, which was never popular among the Jews; the Essenes and Therapeutæ advocated pantheism; the Sadducees denied the immortality of the soul. The growing transcendentalism failed not to yield its natural fruit. Gradually there appeared a philosophy of suicide, and apologists of what had hitherto been so abhorrent to the Jewish people, made their voices heard. The rabbis in particular drew lines of distinction between classes of suicide, making exception in favor of such of these as from the peculiar nature of the circumstances attending them could be committed without dishonor. And this indulgence was extended in a special manner to persons who killed themselves that

[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 410, 411. [2] *Ibid.*

they might escape a situation in which they were obliged to disobey the will of God. The rabbinical maxim on this point was couched in terms the Stoics might have used as their own. It said in substance, that when the believer is so situated that his only choice lies between suicide and a state of permanent antagonism to the divine will, such a situation is all the proof needed that God consents to his self-destruction. They fortified this position by reference to the examples of Sampson, Saul, and Razis.[1]

The circumstances attending the death of Razis were these: Being pursued by the soldiers of Nicanor, who were dispatched to seize him, and preferring death by his own hand to a cruel and dishonoring one at the hands of his enemies, he stabbed himself with his sword. This wound not sufficing, he cast himself from the top of a wall down upon his pursuers, who, scattering to the right and left, let him tumble to the ground. Still alive and undaunted, he started up and made his way to a neighboring precipice. But exhausted by his wounds and almost superhuman efforts, he fainted by the way, and was obliged to desist. Then tearing out his bowels, he flung them amongst his enemies, and called down divine vengeance on their heads.[2] Although the rabbis numbered this suicide among those they considered lawful, nevertheless its attendant circumstances were such as to cause its disapproval by the Hebrew law and people.

Apparently, however, the Jewish people were in no hurry to avail themselves of this rabbinical teaching, for only a very few suicides occurred among them during the distracted period that intervened between the rise of

[1] Grotius, *De Jure Belli et Pacis*, l. ii, c. xxix.

[2] 4 Maccab., 11, 14, 37; Ewald, *Alterth.*, 189; Grotius, *op. cit.*; Smith, *Dict. of the Bible*, Art. *Razis*.

the Hagada and the coming of Christ. Indeed, no material increase in their number took place until after the crucifixion. Various causes, no doubt, contributed to this increase when it did occur. Chief among them were a waning confidence in those political aspirations that had their foundation in the national religion, and the many agonizing incidents of the sanguinary struggle that ended in the destruction of Jerusalem.

One noted example of the latter of these causes happened after the capture of the holy city by Titus, A. D. 70. Among the rebel leaders who escaped was Eleazar. With a few thousand followers he took refuge in the fortress of Masada, where he was soon after besieged by the Roman general Sylva. Knowing that resistance would be fruitless, he urged his followers to kill themselves rather than fall with their families into the hands of an unmerciful enemy, who, he said, not content with slaughtering combatants, would debauch their women, and sell their children into slavery. His appeal was responded to with terrible effect. They first dispatched their women and children, after which they selected ten out of their own number to be executioners of the rest. After doing their work, the ten chose one from among themselves for the same purpose; and when this one was left standing alone, he completed the carnage by falling on his own sword.[1] Another memorable scene belonging to the same struggle, but ending differently, has Josephus for hero. The stronghold is Jotaphat, and the beleagured garrison is urging a general self-massacre. But, unlike Eleazar, Josephus uses all his eloquence to dissuade them from carrying out their intention. He tells them that God hates the crime

[1] Josephus, *Hist. of the Wars of the Jews*, l. vii, c. xxxv.

of suicide, and that "our most wise legislator" has punished it by prohibiting the bodies of suicides to be buried until after sunset. He says that while the body is corruptible, the soul is a portion of the divinity. If a man be wicked and perfidious who destroys a *depositum* committed to his care, how much more so must he be who forcibly extrudes from his body the divine *depositum* of a soul. Those who die a natural death, he declares, are rewarded in heaven, while suicides are punished in hell. And, quite evidently, he is not addressing hearers to whom such arguments are strange, for he asks them if they do not know the truth of all he says.[1]

[1] *Wars of the Jews*, l. iii, ch. viii.

PART SECOND.

RELIGION, MORALS, AND LAWS OF MODERN SOCIETY IN RELATION TO SUICIDE.

CHAPTER I.

Suicide in the Early Christian Church.

THE subject of suicide is once alluded to in the New Testament during the discussion between Christ and the Jews in the treasury of the temple. The Jews were puzzled about what Christ meant by the words: "I will go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go ye cannot come." They asked one another: "Will he kill himself? because he saith, Whither I go ye cannot come."[1] But the only suicide actually specified in the gospels is that of Judas, who, in a fit of great remorse, "went and hanged himself."[2]

There was no need of a special prohibition in the New Testament against suicide. The Jewish people had a natural abhorrence of it, strengthened further by their religion, and the entire spirit of nascent Christianity was against it.

An absorbing missionary zeal took possession of the converts to the new faith. They became imbued with the objective religious spirit, and enrolled themselves as soldiers of the cross. They felt that their earthly life must necessarily be one of toil, privation, and anxiety;

[1] *John*, viii, 22.

[2] *Matthew*, xxvii, 5.

but they also felt that if only they remained faithful to the end they would receive their reward in heaven. St. Paul, dwelling on this hope, compares life to a contest, and the militant Christian to an athlete, whose recompense will be proportioned to his endurance. He assures his hearers "that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." [1] In the same epistle he says: "We glory in tribulations also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope." [2]

Besides these exhortations, the New Testament contains many others to the same effect. "And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake," says Christ, "but he that endureth to the end shall be saved." [3] "Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life." [4] "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." [5]

Suicide was unknown among the primitive Christians, although playing sad havoc in the ranks of their pagan contemporaries. It began among the faithful only when the persecutions against them broke out. Then the mystic spirit, coming to maturity in the church, awakened the old-time contempt for the material life, and caused a feverish longing for the life to come. It was a season of dread and uncertainty. Faith in human justice, reliance in human sympathy were fast slipping away, and all hearts aspired to that spiritual home where the peace of the heavenly rest awaited them.

This mystical craving was encouraged and sustained by the appeals of some fathers of the church. Speaking

[1] *Ep. to the Romans*, c. viii, 18. [2] C. v, 3, 4.
[3] *Matthew*, x, 22. [4] *Revelation*, ii, 10. [5] *Ibid.*, ii, 7.

of Christians, St. Cyprian declares that they are invincible because they fear not death. They do not defend themselves against attacks, because, all innocent as they are, they must not defend themselves against an unjust aggressor. Rather should they give their blood and lives to escape from a cruel and wicked world.[1] He pictures in eloquent language the glories of martyrdom and its eternal reward: "Let us only who, by the Lord's permission, have given the first baptism to believers, also prepare each one for the second; urging and teaching that this is a baptism greater in grace, more lofty in power, more precious in honor,—a baptism wherein angels baptize—a baptism in which God and his Christ exult—a baptism after which no one sins any more—a baptism which completes the increase of our faith—a baptism which, as we withdraw from the world, immediately associates us with God. In the baptism of water is received the remission of sins, in the baptism of blood the crown of virtues."[2] He clothes the ideas of the Stoics in a religious garb, and says: "If we could escape death we might reasonably fear to die. But since . . . it is necessary that a mortal man should die, we should embrace the occasion that comes by divine promise and condescension, and accomplish the ending provided by death, with the reward of immortality; nor fear to be slain, since we are sure when we are slain to be crowned."[3] Tertullian, addressing Christians in prison awaiting martyrdom, fortifies their spirits against the pains of death by instancing some celebrated ancient suicides, among them Lucretia, Empedocles, Peregrinus, Dido, and Cleopatra.

[1] *Ep.*, lx.

[2] *Exhortation to Martyrdom*, addressed to Fortunatus. *Anti-Nicene Christian Library*, Edinburgh, 1849, p. 54.

[3] *Ibid.*, *Ep.*, lv.

He urges that if these heathen underwent painful deaths for the sake of posthumous glory, how much more readily should Christians bear tortures for the recompense of a crown of celestial joy.[1]

The early Fathers did not stop at precept and exhortation. They proved the sincerity of their convictions by their own example. St. Ignatius of Antioch, when about to be exposed in the amphitheatre (A.D., 107 or 115), besought his Roman captors not to deprive him of the crown of martyrdom, and declared that if necessary he would himself provoke the wild beasts to kill him.[2]

The contagion of this feeling spread to the general body of Christians. Many martyrs did provoke the wild beasts to kill them. Many leaped with exclamations of joy into flames kindled to consume them. Some cast themselves headlong from lofty houses, believing death an advantage compared with the malignity of their persecutors.[3] St. Cyprian, describing the martyrdom of Sts. Perpetua and Felicitas, tells how Perpetua placed the wavering right hand of the young gladiator to her throat, adding that possibly she could not have been slain without her consent, as the evil spirit feared her.[4]

When, under the ægis of more just and merciful emperors, Christianity was tolerated, and Christians began to fear that opportunities for securing the crown of martyrdom would cease, the more fanatical of their number had recourse to various expedients for exciting the anger of the pagans against them. They committed intentional breaches of the peace by disturbing the pagan religious services, and then clamored to the magistrates for sen-

[1] *Ad Martyros.*

[2] *Ep. ad Roman.*, c. 4, 5; ap. *Patres Apostol.*, t. ii, p. 27.

[3] Euseb., *Ecclesiast. Hist.*, B. viii, c. 12, 29. [4] *Ep.*, xv.

tence of death.[1] Sometimes, when no one was forthcoming to accuse them of some unlawful act, they accused themselves, and demanded condemnation. Occasionally the magistrates, through feelings of pity not unmixed with contempt, refused to proceed against them on their own testimony alone. Arrius Antoninus, pro-consul of Asia, in the reign of Hadrian, was one of those merciful judges. On one occasion, crowds were gathered about his tribunal, clamoring for martyrdom. He tried to scare them away by ordering a few of their number to be led to punishment; but, finding that this only increased their ardor, he dismissed them all, saying: "Unhappy men! unhappy men! if you are thus weary of your lives, is it so difficult for you to find ropes and precipices?"[2]

Justin Martyr, who himself suffered martyrdom about A.D. 166, takes the mocking advice of Arrius Antoninus seriously to heart, and shows that it would have been contrary to the law of God to have given it effect. The question was often asked by the heathen: "Why, if you all so earnestly desire to die to be with God, do you not kill yourselves and give no trouble to our tribunals?" To this Justin answers that the reasons were because they knew God did not create the world for nothing, but out of love to the human species; and because if Christians killed themselves there would be no teachers of divine truth, and the human race would dwindle away.

It is evident that the pagan persecutions were regarded by the Christians as one of the signs of the end of the world. St. Cyprian, in his epistle to the people of Thibaris exhorting to martyrdom,[3] speaks of "no one desiring any thing from the world that is now dying," and re-

[1] Gibbon, *Decline and Fall*, ch. xvi.

[2] Tertullian, *Lib. ad Scapulam.*

[3] *Ep.*, lv, § 2.

fers to the persecutions predicted by Christ in the last times. So also in the preface to his exhortation to martyrdom, addressed to Fortunatus, he alludes to "the end of the world, the hateful time of Anti-Christ" as drawing near.[1]

From other sources came more pronounced opinions on the conduct of those who wilfully sought martyrdom. During the second century it was condemned, in the affair of Quintas, in the letter of the Church of Smyrna concerning the martyrdom of St. Polycarp.[2] About the same time Clement of Alexandria pronounced those fanatics guilty of suicide who manifested "a brutal impatience to die," comparing them to the Indian Gymnosophists.[3] Commenting on Matthew x, 23, he remarks that, "If he who puts to death one of God's creatures sins against God, he who delivers himself voluntarily to the judges is an accomplice of his own murder. Such a man is he who, instead of shunning persecution, runs audaciously in its very face."[4] The Council of Illibris, Spain, A.D. 305, refused the glory of martyrdom to Christians who were killed while assailing idols.[5] Lactantius, who wrote his *Institutes* about A. D. 320, condemned this seeking for death as wicked and impious. Though the Christian, he said, should have no fear of death, he must not seek it. Still, if ever he has to choose between love of life and love of God, between death and apostacy, he must renounce life and meet death, even a death by slow torture, rather than deny the living God.[6]

The excommunicated sect of Donatists in the fourth

[1] Barbeyrac, *Morale des Péres*, Amsterdam, 1728, c. ii, § 8.
[2] *Ep. Eccl. Smyr.*, 4, ap. *Labbe.*
[3] *Stromat.*, l. iv, c. iv. [4] *Ibid.*, c. xiii.
[5] *Concil. Maxima Collectio*, *T.* i, *Can.* lx, *A. C.* 305.
[6] *Divin. Institut.*, L. vi, c. xvii, *De Vero Cultu.*

century, especially the extreme party among them named Circumcelliones,[1] carried the intemperate zeal for martyrdom to its furthest extreme. St. Augustin, referring to their frequent suicides, congratulates his auditors that the false doctrines of this sect are shorn of their former power for evil. He says it was their daily pastime (*ludus quotidianus*) to kill themselves through zeal for martyrdom, either by precipitating themselves from rocks, by burning themselves alive in fires kindled by their own hands, or by forcing others to kill them, hoping by these shameful deaths to excite adoration in the hearts of the people.[2] While here and there a heathen might be found who, like Empedocles, would cremate himself, swarms of such suicides were to be met with among the Donatists.[3] They were wont to stop travellers on the public highway, whom they tried to induce by bribes or threats to kill them.[4] In a letter to Dulcitius, St. Augustin comments on these suicides in the following terms: "The Church grieves for such as perish in this manner, as David grieved for his rebellious son Absalom. But we have demonstrated in a number of disputations and writings, that they cannot die the death of martyrs who have not lived the life of Christians, since it is not the punishment but the cause that makes the martyr. But concerning those most furious deaths which some of the Donatists inflict on themselves, by which they render themselves abominable and detestable to many even of their own people whose minds are not possessed

[1] *Circumcelliones*, vagrants, from *cellæ*, the huts or cottages of the peasantry around which they hovered.

[2] *Cont. Gaudentium*, c. xxii, *et seq.* *De Unitate Ecclesiæ*, c. xix.

[3] Optat. *Milevitani Episcopi*, L. iii.

[4] Gibbon, *Decline and Fall*, c. xxi. Tillemont, *Mem. Ecclesiast.*, t. vi, pp. 147–165.

with such a madness, we have often answered on the grounds of Scripture and reason—how can he who is perfidious to himself, be good to any one?"

The second form of suicide practised in the primitive church was that which had for motive the preservation of chastity. In some instances it was committed in the actual presence of imminent danger to purity, while in others it was the result of a mere dread of its approach. St. Pelagia threw herself from the roof of her house to escape the assaults of her captors.[1] For the same reason Sophronia stabbed herself, and Domniana drowned herself with her two daughters.[2] It is said of Digna of Aquilia that being solicited by Attila, she feigned an appointment with him at the top of her house. Arrived there she leaped out, crying to him in her descent: "If you want me you must follow."[3]

Suicides of this class appealed to the fervid spiritualism and high moral purity of the early Church, and were commended by some of the Fathers. Referring to them, St. Ambrose declared that God was not offended by such a remedy, and that faith exalted it.[4] ("Deus remidio non offenditur, et facinus fides elevat.") St. Chrysostom held the same opinion. He regarded such a death as an extraordinary baptism comparable to the sufferings of Christ.[5] St. Jerome, while reprobating suicide and denying its lawfulness as a means of escaping persecution, makes exception in favor of suicide to preserve chastity. "It is not for us," he says, "to inflict death upon ourselves, but we should willingly undergo it when

[1] Ambrose, *De Virginibus*, iii, 17.

[2] Eusebius, *Ecclesiast. Hist.*, viii, 12.

[3] For other examples see Eusebius; also Tillemont, t. v, pp. 404, 405.

[4] *Op. cit.*, iii. [5] *Orat. Panyger. in s. s. Bernic. Prosdoc.*, t. v.

inflicted by others. Even in persecutions it is not allowed us to kill ourselves except when there is risk of loss of chastity." He and St. Chrysostom agree that in this exceptional class of cases, the martyr acts under the inspiration of God, who could not prompt a deed either bad in itself or contrary to natural law. On the other hand, St. Augustin will not admit that this class of cases forms any exception to the sinfulness of suicide. While granting that virgin suicides are worthy of all compassion, he holds that not even actual violation is sufficient excuse for self-murder. After asking how pollution of the body can defile a non-consenting soul, he argues that "one may still be chaste in spite of forced pollution, as, on the contrary, one may be unchaste from impure desires, though the body be kept inviolate. Were it right to commit suicide in order to escape danger of future guilt, it were best for the Christian to kill himself immediately after baptism, when, his soul having been washed from sin, he is in the best possible way to accomplish his eternal salvation. But to maintain such a doctrine were sheer madness. No one should commit suicide, neither to escape temporal sufferings lest he fall into eternal ones, nor from fear of another's sin lest he fall into a really grievous one of his own, nor for past sins which it is every one's duty to live and repent, nor, finally, for a better life, because a better life will not be given to the self-murderer." [1]

The question of suicide among the newly baptized, which St. Augustin raises to give force and point to his argument against all suicide, was a real and not very in-

[1] *De Civitate Dei*, l. i. Upon the capture of Rome by Alaric the Goth, many Christian women of the city killed themselves to avoid pollution by the conquerors. The question was afterward debated whether the conduct of these women was right, and St. Augustin answered it in the *Civitate Dei*.

frequent occurrence among some of the new converts to Christianity. After St. Patrick had baptized the two daughters of King Laoghaire—Ethen the fair and Fedelm the ruddy,—they, desiring to see the face of Christ, died a voluntary death.[1] The first convert made by the same Saint, while preaching in Dal-aradia, was Dichu of Saul. After his conversion, he was given a choice between a long life and an immediate ascent to Heaven. He chose the latter and "departed unto the Lord."[2] Another example of the extreme religious ardor of new converts to the faith, is found in the legend of St. Ovan, who died a voluntary death to save the island of Hy from Druidical influences, in fulfilment of a prediction that such would be the happy result if a Christian body were the first one buried there.[3] Some of these converts purposely caused their own deaths by extreme asceticism, with the aid of occasional bleedings,—a practice afterward known among the Albigenses, and named *Endura*.[4]

It is evident from the foregoing observations on the subject of suicide in the early Church, that three classes of it were, at sundry times and in some places, regarded with favor, or at least leniency, though later on a general condemnation was passed upon all self-murder by the Fathers and Councils to whose decisions more detailed reference will be made in the next chapter. These classes were martyr-suicides, virgin-suicides, and the suicides of ascetics. The ground of exception is that these classes of suicides resulted not from self-will, but from divine inspiration.[5] St. Augustin, while apparently condemn-

[1] Todd, *Life of St. Patrick*, p. 454.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 459. [3] *Ibid.*, *loc. cit.*

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 462. Maitland, *Facts and Documents; British Magazine*, vol. xxvi, p. 7.

[5] Tillemont, *Hist. Ecclesiast.*, t. v, part iii.

ing even these classes, leaves the question of inspiration open, and contents himself with observing that if such suicides were divinely inspired, they could not have been sinful; but that before pronouncing them sinless there should be no doubt about the reality of the inspiration.

(Barbeyrac, *Morale des Péres*, accuses Sts. Justin, Cyprian, Jerome, Chrysostom, and Ambrose, of expressing views favorable to suicide. He is answered by Buonafède, *op. cit.*, p. 228, *et seq*, who asserts that the surrender of life in the cause of religion is sometimes necessary and useful to religion. He asks his opponent, if martyrs for religion are not as commendable at least as martyrs for country or society. A martyr of the right kind is one who demands death with fervor and endures it with courage, either to sustain religion or to confound the unbelieving. Such martyrdom adds to one's merit and gives one the right to see the glory of God. To demand martyrdom is to aspire to the sum of all good; therefore the desire of it is a virtue. That is the desire with which St. Paul was inflamed when he said: "I desire to die and be with Jesus Christ.")

One more among the causes of suicide in the early Christian Church remains to be mentioned. It was *Athumia*, a mental ailment frequent among the monks. Its characteristics were melancholy and loss of interest in life. There is an exhortation in the homilies of St. Chrysostom, addressed to Stagyra, who contemplated suicide in such a mood. Stagyra was a youth of noble birth, who, growing dissatisfied with the world, entered a monastery in search of happiness. So radical a change in his mode of life begat a despondency in which he imagined himself tempted by the Devil to commit suicide. The Saint tells him that the true remedy for his ailment is

matrimony and the pleasures of paternity. "What causes you pain, Stagyra, is to see that many men who were tormented by the demon of melancholy, when they lived among the delights and pleasures of the world, find themselves entirely cured as soon as they have married and have had children; while neither your fastings, your watchings, nor all the austerities of the monastery can alleviate your pain." [1]

Let us interrupt the thread of our study here while we turn to glance at suicide in relation to the Spanish conquest of America on the one hand, and the precepts of Mohammedanism on the other.

The Spaniards who introduced Christianity into the New World, planted slavery there at the same time. Many of their Indian slaves killed themselves to escape from the cruelties they inflicted upon them; and so numerous were these deaths that the population of the West India Islands diminished in the sixteenth century to an alarming extent. One of the Spanish proprietors stopped the spread of a suicide epidemic among his Indian slaves by threatening to kill himself and follow them with increased severity of treatment into the next world. Many of the suicides that occurred among the Mexican and Peruvian slaves of the time, were due to severe labor in the mines, enforced upon them without respect to rank or person. A Yucatan chief who found himself obliged to submit to drudgery of this kind in company with his former subjects, called them together, to the number of ninety-five, and addressed to them the following exhortation: "My worthy companions and friends, why desire we to live any longer under so cruel a servitude? Let us

[1] St. Chrysostom, *Homilies*, quoted in Girardin, *Lectures on Dramatic Literature*, first series, New York, 1849, p. 63.

now go unto the perpetual seat of our ancestors, for we shall then have rest from these intolerable cares and grievances which we endure under the subjection of the unthankful. Go before; I will presently follow you." So saying, he gave them handfuls of poisonous leaves, with instructions to burn them and inhale their smoke. They did as he bade them, and all died to a man, after which he immediately followed their example.[1]

What the Christian warriors of Spain did to embitter the lives of their American slaves, is at least partly atoned for by the successful efforts of Christian missionaries to stop the practice of Suttee in Peru. It was customary in that country to enforce this rite upon the widows of dead chieftains. After much labor the missionaries succeeded in abolishing it, though they could not always prevent bereaved females from discovering some secret means of following their deceased lords into the world of happy spirits. At the lying-in-state of the Inca Atahuallpa in the Church of St. Francis, Lima, his wives and sisters rushed within the sacred precincts loudly declaring their purpose to sacrifice themselves on his tomb. They were assured by the missionaries that the king had died a Christian, and that the God of Christians abhorred such sacrifices as they contemplated, and they were expelled the church. But for all that, many of them found other means and opportunities to destroy themselves.

Though the followers of Mohammed are taught to view the near approach of death with calm indifference, they are forbidden to have recourse to suicide under any circumstances. This may look strange at first sight, in view

[1] Froude, J. A., *Short Studies on Great Subjects*, London, 1868, 3d ed., p. 308, *et seq.*

of the pessimist theory of life adopted in the Koran, where earthly existence is compared to a passing shadow, its joys and gratifications to baseless delusions. "Know that this life is but a sport,—a pastime,—a show,—a cause of vainglory among you! and the multiplying of riches and children is like the plants which spring up after rain; whose growth rejoices the husbandmen; then they wither away and thou seest them all yellow; then they become stubble." But the appearance of strangeness vanishes so soon as it is remembered that Mohammed taught above all other doctrines the doctrine of submission to the divine will in all things. God, he declared, had appointed to every man his destiny (Kismet), and the time of his death (Edgel). It were useless therefore for any one to be dissatisfied with his lot. Whatever it is, it must be borne, and not only this, but accepted in a spirit of cheerful resignation. As to death, its time is irrevocably foreordained for each one, and cannot be hastened by a single moment.[1]

Besides these general religious precepts, the Koran contains many special prohibitions against suicide.[2] In one of these the question is, "What ought one to think of suicide?" to which the answer is given, "It is a much graver crime than homicide."[3] These prohibitions were fully sustained by public opinion so long as Mohammedanism preserved the simplicity of its primitive religious faith. But during the time of the Assassins in the eleventh century, and the subsequent commotions and revolutions, public opinion became more lenient to suicide, and it increased in frequency. The doc-

[1] Alkoran, Surah, iii, v. 139, 148; lvii, v. 19.

[2] Surah, ii, v. 88, 89, etc.

[3] Fethwa, in *Tableau général de l'Empire Ottoman*, par. M. de M. d'Ohsson, Paris, 1791, quoted in Lisle, p. 344.

trine of fatalism, too, tended ultimately to a degree of indifference almost suicidal where life was concerned. An observing traveller has remarked among the Turks many instances "of apparent satisfaction in death, which was simply suicide, the sufferer refusing to take the simplest precaution against impending fate. Typhus, plague, cholera, and all their train, have ravaged the Moslem hosts unopposed.[1]

[1] Hamlin, *Among the Turks*, New York, 1878.

CHAPTER II.

Suicide in the Middle Ages.

CHRISTIAN monasteries were occasionally scenes of melancholy suicides by monks, who, crazed by the temptations that were wont to assail them, stabbed themselves, or leaped from precipices, in the belief that they were imitating the holy martyrs.[1] Others deliberately starved themselves to death in order to obtain release from interior conflicts.[2] The Abbot Pachomius found it necessary to warn his monks against the danger of giving way to the desponding moods which culminated in these suicides. "If," he says, "suggestions to blaspheme God present themselves to one who wants a truly prudent and collected spirit, they will soon plunge him to destruction. Hence many have destroyed themselves; some, bereft of their senses, have cast themselves from precipices; others laid open their bowels; others killed themselves in different ways: for it is something very bad, if one who understands the evil does not point it out to such persons ere it becomes rooted."[3]

Outside the monasteries, in the civic, military, and ecclesiastical life of the middle ages, impulsive suicide

[1] Nilus, i, ii, Ep. 140, f. 182.

[2] Greg. Nozianz., *Carmen* 47 *ad Hellenium*, Opp. T. ii, f. 107.

[3] *Vit. Pachom.*, § 61, quoted in Neander, *Gen. Hist. of the Christian Religion and Church*, vol. iii, pp. 319, 320, and note.

was not to say infrequent. Several instances of it are mentioned among the Franks after their establishment in Gaul. Meroveus, son of Childeric, having been caught in a conspiracy against his father, died at the hands of his companion Gaïlen, whom he induced to stab him.[1] Palladius, hearing that King Sigebert was intent on having his life, anticipated his fate by falling upon his sword. The first wound not having proved immediately fatal, the devil, as it was said, gave him strength to inflict on himself another, of which he soon died.[2] Epidemics of suicide broke out now and then during the middle ages, in times of great popular commotion, as in Spain at the close of the Gothic Kingdom,[3] and in England in the seventh century. "In the year of grace 665," says a contemporary writer, "there was such an excessive mortality in England, that the people crowded to the seaside, and threw themselves from the cliffs into the sea, choosing rather to be cut off by a speedy death than to die by the lingering torments of the pestilence."[4] Many suicides happened during the political and religious changes which marked the stirring reign of Hugues Capet in France, and the aggrandizement of his dynasty. It was a time when all the forces of society seemed agitated to their foundations and arrayed against each other. The rich grievously oppressed the poor who clamored for their rights.[5] The irreligious scoffed at Christian truth, while the devout urged on the holy wars for the capture of Jerusalem and the punishment of the Albigenses and Waldenses. In the universal commotion of

[1] Greg. Tours, *Hist. des Francs*, l. v, t. i, p. 246.

[2] *Ibid.*, l. iv, t. ii, pp. 198, 199.

[3] Bourret, *L' Ecole Chretienne de Seville*, etc.

[4] Roger of Wendover, *Flowers of History*, A. D. 665.

[5] Seebohm, *Era of the Protestant Revolution*, N. Y., 1874.

this period, there were seasons of profound melancholy, during which the many sad incidents that were constantly occurring drove some afflicted souls to suicide. Grief for the loss of her husband impelled Blanche of Castile, the pious mother of St. Louis, to attempt her life. Knights like Regnauld, Count of Boulogne, who were taken prisoners on the field of battle, and immured in loathsome dungeons from which escape was impossible, killed themselves in despair.[1] A similar end overtook many true lovers long time separated by the holy wars, while others, who doubtless suffered equal torments, were only deterred from so evil a fate, like Yon de Gascogne, by fear of Divine wrath.[2]

The old-time zeal for Christian martyrdom flashed out occasionally during the Crusades. At the battle of Hittin, where the Latin Empire of the East was broken forever, those Knights Templars who refused to adopt the Moslem faith were ruthlessly slain by command of Saladin; and many Christian soldiers who thirsted for the glory of martyrdom, but were not of that order, put on the mantles of the slain Templars and went gladly to their deaths.

As a final instance of the peculiar influences at work in the production of suicide during this period, it may be mentioned that when Pope Hildebrand imposed the decree of celibacy on the clergy of the Western Church, many of their discarded wives killed themselves.[3]

Unquestionably the greatest sufferers during the suicide epidemics of the middle ages were the Jews, many

[1] *Chansons Historiques*, publiées par M. Le Roux de Lincy, Paris, 1829.

[2] A minute study of the suicides of the middle ages has been made by M. Bourquelot, and may be found in vols. iii and iv of the *Bibliothèque de l'Ecole des Chartres.*

[3] Lea, *History of Sacerdotal Celibacy*, p. 248.

of whom were goaded to self-destruction by the fanatical persecutions of the Christians. A large number slew themselves in France, in 1095, to escape torture. Five hundred died by their own hands on a single occasion in York, and an equal number during the siege of the Castle of Verdun, on the Garonne, by the fanatical shepherds in 1320.[1] During the rage of the Black Death in the Rhenish towns, from 1348 to 1350, the Jews were blindly accused of causing the pestilence by poisoning the wells. To escape popular fury aroused by the spread of this delusion, numbers are said to have burned themselves to death in their synagogues,[2] or to have massacred themselves in their houses.

It will be noticed that all these are examples of impulsive suicide, resulting from individual or social perturbations. Deliberate suicide seems to have ceased almost entirely with the establishment of Christianity, and to have continued in abeyance until the reign of philosophic skepticism in the eighteenth century. What few suicides did occur within the pale of the Church were caused by the action of depressing emotions and passions, and, so far as known, were mostly confined to monasteries and convents. The inmates of these religious retreats, shut off from lay society, from the salutary amusements, and no less salutary interests of the outer world, and meditating chiefly upon sin and its consequences, gradually fell into a melancholy known as *Acidia*, during the paroxysms of which suicides were occasionally committed. But, considering the comparative frequency of religious melancholy among the inmates of monasteries and convents, suicide was a very exceptional occurrence, owing most

[1] Michelet, *Hist. de France.*—Buegnot, *Memoir of the Jews of the West.*

[2] Bourquelot, *op. cit.*—Esquirol, *Maladies Mentales*, t. i, p. 591.

probably to a firm belief in its great sinfulness. The pious writer who chronicles such cases of it as did happen, is loth to tell them, and refrains from indicating the institutions in which they took place.[1]

A few examples may be given to show the character of the monastic suicides. A monk, whose hair had grown gray in the practice of austere and pious works, was at length overpowered by melancholy and distracted with harassing doubts. He refused the sacraments and gave himself up for lost beyond redemption. One day he cast himself into the river Moselle, but was fortunately rescued in time to save his life. A lay brother, who had been an example of good conduct and scrupulous discharge of duty, fell into a melancholy. Despairing of God's mercy and of his own eternal salvation, he could pray no longer. At length, finding his misery unendurable, he plunged into a cistern and was drowned.[2] A monk, weakened in intellect by long fasts and vigils, hung himself from the belfry of his monastery. Though cut down in time to save his life, he never afterward regained his reason.[3]

With the exception of these and similar cases, all of which are manifestly examples of suicide from insane melancholy, the ages that stretch from the fall of the Roman Empire to the fifteenth century show comparatively few instances of voluntary death. The *Journal du Règne de Henri* IV, which includes nearly a century, and notes with scrupulous care the incidents of the time, however trivial, does not record more than thirty suicides.[4]

[1] Cæsar, *Dialog. Miraculorum*, c. xl. [2] *Ibid.*

[3] *Ibid.* See also Bourquelot, *op. cit.*, and Lisle, *Du Suicide*, pages 415, 416.

[4] Pierre de l' Etoile, *Journal du Règne de Henri IV*, quoted in Lisle, *Du Suicide*, page 423. Nothing, however, can be positively affirmed respecting the peasant class. Judging of their misery from the accounts that have come down to us, and remembering how little hope they had of a remedy, it would

Furthermore, neither this journal nor the *Satyre of Menippus*, published in 1593, records a single suicide during the siege of Paris in 1590; though, while it lasted, the Parisians suffered the greatest extremes of privation, and were driven by hunger to devour dogs, rats, nay, even the bones of dead men ground to a flour. Lisle compares the sufferings of the Parisians during this memorable siege with those of other cities under like conditions in ancient times, and regards their immunity from suicide as very remarkable. He ascribes it to the religious conviction of the time that suicide was the greatest of crimes in the eyes of God, a crime punishable by eternal damnation.[1] Voltaire observes that in the civil wars of the League in France, and of the Guelphs and Ghibellines in Italy, not one of the leaders of either party committed suicide. The Duke of Montmorency, the Marshals of Marillac, Thou, and St. Mars, preferred being led to execution, like highwaymen, to killing themselves. He contrasts their submission to ignominious deaths with the dramatic suicides of Cato, Brutus, and other pagan celebrities, and endeavors to account for the difference between them on the slender theory that, while suicide was fashionable in Rome, hanging was the fashion in Paris. He comes much nearer the mark when, in a preceding sentence, he observes that the Frenchmen were Christians, and owns that the principles of a Catholic warrior differed entirely from those of a pagan hero.[2]

be safe to hazard the conjecture that suicide could not have been unknown among them; unless, indeed, the fear of dying in mortal sin was sufficiently strong on all occasions to deter them. The chronicles and histories of the time are occupied exclusively with the proceedings of royal courts, baronial halls, and cities, which latter, like Paris, were gaining rapidly in population, wealth, and political influence.

[1] *Op. cit.*, page 425.

[2] *Ouvres*, vol. iv, *Melanges de Literature, d'Histoire, et de Philosophie.*

The religious upheavals which preceded and accompanied the Reformation caused an increase of suicides throughout Europe, and many of the religious fanatics of the time, who appeared as possessed of the devil, devil worshippers, and witches during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, killed themselves under stress of either mania, melancholia, or persecution. Soon after the publication of the Bull of Innocent VIII against witchcraft, the persecution of witches became widespread and revolting for its cruelty. Horrors followed upon horrors during two centuries and a half, until they reached their culminating point between 1610 and 1660 A.D. It is estimated that in Germany alone the number of victims dating from Innocent's Bull amounted to at least one hundred thousand. The persecution lingered until the commencement of the eighteenth century.[1] Sprenger records examples of suicides by the possessed in Germany to escape the persecutions, and also the interior struggles incident to their condition.[2] Michælis tells the story of one Madeline de Mandols, whom the devil worried with fears regarding the salvation of her soul, and with temptations to burn herself alive. After long and desperate resistance to these, she at length succumbed, and was found dead with a part of her body lying consumed in the fire.[3]

Nicholas Remy, criminal prosecutor in the Duchy of Lorraine, near the end of the sixteenth century, says that during his fifteen years' tenure of office he met with many persons who would willingly have renounced their compact with Satan, but that the latter, fearing they might succeed, inspired them with so great a desire for

[1] Hauber, *Acta et Scripta Magica; Foreign Quarterly Rev.*, Art. *Demonology and Witchcraft*, vol. vi, page 1, *et seq.*

[2] *Malleus Malleficarum.*

[3] *Hist. Admirable de la Possession.*

suicide, that they killed themselves in no inconsiderable numbers by hanging, drowning, or stabbing. Many, hesitating to destroy themselves, entreated the judges to pronounce sentence of death on them, that they might be freed from the bonds of their master and the wretchedness of this life.[1]

The difference as regards tendency to suicide between the demoniacs of these and the inspired of God in other epidemics is remarkable. During the long religious struggle that followed the revocation of the edict of Nantes, many Calvinists, believing themselves vessels of divine inspiration, sustained without faltering the cruel persecutions of their enemies; nor did they throughout all their sufferings afford one example of suicide.

Finally, it may be observed that the Tarantula mania which raged in the Neapolitan districts between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries, was marked by the suicides of many of its victims, who drowned themselves in large numbers in the sea.[2]

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[1] *Demolatriæ*, l. iii, 1596.

[2] Hecker, *Epidem. of the Middle Ages*, p. 121

CHAPTER III.

Suicide in Modern Times.

GRADUALLY, as the result of causes, some of which had been working silently for ages,[1] while others had but recently appeared,[2] an awakening of the human mind took place toward the close of the fourteenth century, and the Renaissance (re-birth) began. The dissatisfied spirit of man, whilom vaccillating between the turmoil of war and the seclusion of monastic life, sought new outlets in various directions: in art, geographical discovery, and maritime adventure; in mechanical inventions, the acquisition of long-buried treasures of knowledge, and the development of national life and institutions. The chief feature of this revival was an emphatic assertion of the principle of human freedom. Mind and conscience emancipated themselves from the restraints of mediævalism. The sphere of life expanded and took in the beautiful not in nature only, but in art, and the literature of antiquity[3] also. The intellectual element accompanying this movement gave thought a philosophical and humanitarian bent, while its emotional tendencies led away from the

[1] The political and social changes effected by the barbarian conquest of the Roman Empire, and the fall of the Empire of the East.

[2] The Copernican system, navigation, printing.

[3] Symonds, *Hist. of the Renaissance in Italy*, ch. i, where the progress and consequences of this movement are sketched.

narrow mysticism of the cloister to the varied life of the world, with all its cares and interests. But, like all such reactions, this too became extreme. The subjective element in personal temperament, insinuating itself into the simple emotion of natural beauty, made it sensuous; and, entering into the newly awakened interest in Greek and Roman learning, moulded character and conduct in Greek and Roman forms. Men began to think and act as they imagined their pagan models had acted and thought. The growing sensuousness of life, its moral and intellectual paganism, together with the political and social disorders of the period, caused a marked increase in the number of suicides, and soon there arose a literature in its defence based on the notions of ancient times.

A marked feature of the Renaissance was the inferior value set on human life. Murders were of daily occurrence, and so popular had the vendetta grown among all classes that the spirit of patient endurance of injury was universally derided.[1] Even in Florence, which boasted a large share of political freedom and commercial prosperity, life and property were not safe, and suicides were more frequent than anywhere else throughout Italy.[2]

Among the first of the apologists just alluded to is Dr. John Donne, who was born in 1573. Though educated in the Catholic communion, he embraced Protestantism in his twentieth year, and was made Dean of St. Paul's in 1621, which position he held until his death in 1631. In a letter to Sir Robert Carr, accompanying a manuscript copy of his defence of suicide, he says that, though written many years before, it had not been published, "because it is upon a misinterpretable subject." He re-

[1] Pulci, *Morgante Cant.*, xxi, Str. 83–104.

[2] Pierio Valeriano, *De Infelicitate Literatorum*, ap. Burckhart, *Renaissance in Italy*. London, vol. i, p. 389.

quests his friend to keep it safe while he lives, and to neither destroy nor publish it when he dies. But after his demise it fell into the hands of his son, who had it printed and given to the public in 1644, under the title "Biathanatos."[1] It may be said generally that Donne's position is in a measure a reaction against the patristic doctrine of the inherent sinfulness of suicide, and an attempt to prove that it "may be (sometimes) free, not only from * * * enormous degrees of sin, but from all sin." The casuists of the middle ages had argued in proof of the irremissibility of the sin of suicide, on the ground that all unrepented sin being irremissible, and suicide being necessarily an unrepented sin, it must therefore be irremissibly sinful. Donne regarded this conclusion in the light of an uncharitable limitation of the mercies of a "benign and compassionate Deity." His next point is that suicide is no more than any other sin an offence against man's nature. True, it is called a sin against a particular law of nature, the law of self-preservation; but this, like every other law, admits of exceptions releasing individuals from its restraints. This conclusion, he thinks, is sustained by universal sentiment and custom. Everywhere "man, as though he were an *angelus sepultus*, labors to be discharged of his earthly sepulchre, his body." He instances the suicides of classical antiquity, the custom of human funeral sacrifice, and, after Christianity had banished all such practices by inculcating true views of the soul and of a future state, the survival of the same longing for release from life in the desire for martyrdom. He alludes, furthermore, to the liberty to commit suicide given by the customs and laws of antiquity, except in cases where its exercise would be

[1] Moore, *Full Inquiry*, vol. ii, ch. 1.

prejudicial to the interests of the state; a liberty which could not have been granted were suicide so flagrant a breach of natural obligation as some would have us believe. From this he passes to the opinions of the Fathers and the decrees of Canon law, in which latter he finds "that self-murder is nowhere condemned as heretical."

Another of these modern apologists of suicide is John Robeck. The general drift of his argument is similar to the foregoing, though, in all probability, he had never seen Donne's book. He was a Swedish philosopher of gloomy disposition and retiring habits. While studying classical literature at the University of Upsal, he read deeply in the writings of Marcus Aurelius, and imbibed the Stoic contempt of life. He afterward went to Germany, entered the Catholic fold, and became a Jesuit priest. In Hamburg, where he resided a while, he led a solitary life, scorning every thing, even his sacred order of priesthood. In search of still more undisturbed quiet, he retired into the country, where he gave himself up to meditation on death. From this retreat he wrote a letter to Funcius, a noted professor in the Academy of Rinteln, in which he spoke of his increasing melancholy and growing desire for death. Not long afterward he disposed of his goods, clad himself in neat attire, and embarked on the river Weser, from which his dead body was recovered in a few days. In the dissertation which he gave to the public at Rinteln in 1736,[1] he tries to prove that there is no law, either natural or divine, against suicide in such circumstances, for instance, as painful and incurable disease, danger of loss of virtue, and, in short, whatever risks and sufferings can only be ended by

[1] Its full title is: *Exercitatio philosophica de* ΕΥΘΑΝΑΣΙΑ ΕΞΑΓΩΓΗ, *sive morte voluntaria philosophorum et bonorum virorum etiam Judæorum et Christianorum.*

death. He argues against the absolute force of the divine mandate, "Thou shalt not kill," showing that it admits of exceptions when killing is done in self-defence or in battle, and that by parity of reason it is also open to exceptions in the case of suicide, a deed which is justified moreover by the example of most nations of antiquity.

On the European continent the subject of suicide early engaged the attention of scholars, and Montaigne, who has been styled the father of French skepticism, reviewed it in his essays, first published between 1580 and 1588. Although, he says, there is "more courage in bearing the chain by which we are bound than in breaking it, and more evidence of fortitude in Regulus than in Cato," his evident inclination is to the Stoic way of thinking, for he gives it as his own opinion that pain and the fear of a worse death are good excuses for suicide.[1]

As the fruit of the Renaissance movement matured in Europe, there ripened with it a plentiful growth of religious skepticism and moral license. "The religious feeling was dissipated in unbridled licentiousness, and even so late as the end of the sixteenth century, the great Scaliger complains that the learned class in Italy are universally atheists."[2] One of the results of this moral disorder was a return to dogmatic belief and stricter discipline, as embodied in Calvinism on the continent, and Puritanism in England. But these were pushed to such extremes as to cause fresh reaction in the form of a rationalistic philosophy and an Epicurean morality. It is usual to trace the new school of rationalism that now

[1] *Essays*, B. ii, ch. iii, xiii. For the influence of Montaigne's writings on subsequent French philosophy, see Tenneman, *Gesch. der Philos.*, vol. ix, p. 443.

[2] Bunsen, *God in History*, vol. iii, B, v, c, ix, London, 1870.

appeared to the English philosophy of the eighteenth century; but it had its real beginning in the heart of Europe a full century earlier.

Although Luther had informally condemned suicide,[1] the critical spirit born of the Reformation was not thereby deterred from making it the subject of philosophical investigation. Some thirty years after the publication of the treatise *De Jure Belli et Pacis* of Grotius, in which the penalties inflicted on the bodies of suicides by ancient laws are approved,[2] Puffendorff produced the still more important work, *De Jure Naturæ et Gentium.* This production, which is generally conceded to be a model of philosophical insight and method, begins with examining the law of nature in its relation to individuals. The law of self-preservation, it declares, is a constituent part of natural law, and is implanted in us that we may preserve our lives for the service of God and society. When, however, we are so placed by force of circumstances as to make the fulfilment of the intention of this law impossible, it ceases to be binding, and suicide is justifiable. This is the Stoic argument over again, which Puffendorf contents himself with stating, leaving the rest to his readers.

The spirit of rationalism inaugurated by Grotius and Puffendorf under the protecting ægis of the Reformation, found its way to England near the middle of the eighteenth century, and remained in the ascendant there until it was appropriated by the pre-revolutionary minds of France. Its chief apostles in its new home were

[1] "It is very certain that, as to all persons who have hanged themselves, or killed themselves in any other way, 't is the devil who has put the cord round their necks, or the knife to their throats." *Table Talk*, Hazlitt's Ed., London, 1857.

[2] L. ii, c. xix.

Locke and Hume, the former of whom materalized mind, while the latter consigned revealed religion to the realm of superstition. Hume, assuming the rôle of Epicurus, endeavors "to restore men to their natural liberty, by showing that suicide may be free from every imputation of blame or guilt, according to the sentiments of all the ancient philosophers." As regards the liberty to choose this in preference to natural modes of death, he holds that Christians and heathens are on the same footing, since Scripture does not expressly prohibit it; and that if "Cato and Brutus, Arrea and Portia acted heroically, those who now imitate their example ought to receive like praises from posterity." What, in point of fact, is the life of a man any more than the life of an oyster? A hair, a fly, an insect can destroy it; and, if so, why may not human prudence "lawfully dispose of what depends on such insignificant causes." Assuming that there would be no crime in diverting the Nile or Danube from its course if he could, he concludes there can be "no crime in turning a few ounces of blood out of their natural channel." Far from being an act of rebellion against the divine will, suicide is one of submission to that will; while on the contrary the enduring of misery and affliction is in itself that very act of rebellion. Nor is suicide a crime against society. "A man who retires from life does no harm to society; he only ceases to do good; which, if it be an injury, is of the lowest kind." While admitting his obligations to society, Hume believes he is "not bound to do a small good to it at the expense of a great harm to himself, and that he should not be obliged to prolong a miserable existence because of some frivolous advantage which the public may perhaps receive from him."

This was the last serious attempt in England to revive the Epicurean doctrine of suicide. It failed for the reason, perhaps, that it was never widely published. The wonder now is that a scholar of Hume's ability should have written any thing so weak and sophistical. The treatise is scarce at the present day. It was published at London in 1783, accompanied by editorial remarks intended as an "antidote to the poison contained" in this and its companion essay on the Immortality of the Soul. It is included in the edition of the Philosophical Works in four volumes, published at Edinburgh in 1826.

As we approach the period of the French Revolution the writers on suicide increase in number. Deslandes advocated it with warmth, declaring that there are many occasions on which it is a glorious thing to kill one's self. Seneca had, in his opinion, established the right of every man over his own existence, a right all acquire at birth, and by which all are elevated above nature itself. If laws were only made conformable to common sense, the injustice of punishing suicide would need no proof.[1]

Montesquieu put the argument for and against suicide in two of his *Persian Letters*. In the first, Usbek, writing to his friend Ibbin, asks why one who is loaded down with misery should not be at liberty to end his life. It cannot be for the sake of society, because society is founded on mutual advantage. If the individual not only ceases to feel his share of the advantage, but finds the tie burdensome, he ought to be at liberty to sever it. His friend made answer, But you disturb the order of Providence. Not at all, replies Usbek; I may disturb all nature according to my fancy without putting

[1] *Reflexions sur les grand hommes morts en badinant*, quoted in Moore, *op. cit.*, vol. ii.

myself in opposition to Providence. There can be none the less order in the universe when my soul is separated from my body. To argue to the contrary only shows our vanity, and how completely we fail to realize our own littleness. Ibbin's reply has at least the merit of conciseness. He says, in sum, that it is a religious duty to submit to the will of the Creator, and that we are bound by our social obligations to bear our social burdens.[1]

Rousseau devotes two letters of his *Nouvelle Héloïse* to the same topic. The first[2] is addressed by St. Prieux to an English friend; the second is this friend's answer, and may, as is supposed, contain Rousseau's own sentiments.[3] St. Prieux, who loves Julie with a too ardent passion, begins by declaring his life so irksome, vexatious, and heavy that he cannot endure it longer; but he will never shorten it until convinced that in so doing he is not committing a crime against either his Creator or his friend. He then invites this friend to a temperate discussion of the matter. As for himself, the more he reflects the stronger grow his convictions on the following points, namely: that every one has a natural right to seek his own good and avoid what is likely to injure himself by all means not injurious to others; and that life may be cut short when it becomes a burden to its possessor and is a benefit to no one. He then proceeds to consider the old Pythagorean objection, that God has placed man at his post in this life and has forbidden him to leave it without His permission. Why, then, do we leave the town in which we were born without His order? But, is it not a plain intimation of His order to us when He

[1] *Letters Persannes*, L. lxxvi, lxxvii.

[2] L. xxi, *De l'Amant de Julie à Milord Edouard.*

[3] L. xxii, *Réponse.*

allows our lives to be made miserable? And is not obedience to His command when so intimated evidence of entire submission to His will? The soul, casting off this worn out vesture of a body, and joyfully winging its way from worldly desires, is absolutely free to serve God, for which duty we are the less fitted the longer we live. Of course the human race ought not to exterminate itself and make one huge graveyard of this earth. Enough men of nerve and muscle should always remain to carry on the affairs of the world. But what of the many sensitive beings to whom material existence is nothing but torture? Why should they be prevented from killing themselves? None but fools desire to prolong life in affliction. Is not the speedy though painful cure of the surgeon's knife preferable to the agony of a slow mortification? Lord Edward coolly replies that his correspondent's arguments are mere sophistry. Does he not believe that God places man in this world for some moral object? His argument that he has a right to kill himself because he feels inclined that way, might be used to justify every crime under the sun. He has work to do in this life; let him do it. If he should have finished his task before evening, let him rest. But let him not weary of life because it is too long; let him not say, either, that because he cannot possess the object of an unholy passion, he will kill himself. An effort of will can subdue such a passion; if not, time will cure it, and then life, which now seems an evil, will be a blessing. When the temptation to suicide assails you, say to yourself "Let me do one good action before I die," and then search out an object of your beneficence. If this can restrain you to-day, it will to-morrow, and so on to the end of your natural life.

It will be observed that much stress is laid in the foregoing arguments on the relation of the human person to the law of nature. This law regained during the first half of the eighteenth century the importance it formerly enjoyed in the classic schools of antiquity. The Deist controversy of a century and a half ago had much to say about "the law of nature," "the state of nature," and "the religion of nature;" and the French philosophers of pre-Revolutionary time declaimed eloquently, though vaguely, upon the same topic. Rousseau, who followed the English Deists, and whose profession of faith, as uttered by his Savoyard Vicar, was so influential with the leaders of the Revolution, preached to an attentive world his gospel of a return to the state of nature. The discords and miseries of life, he said, arise from man's abuse of his freedom, from his acting contrary to natural dictates. All will be well when he subjects his free will to the will of nature as displayed in her unchangeable order and great simplicity. But the attempt to reconstruct religion and society on the law of nature and on reason, disappeared in the great whirl of the French Revolution. When the fury of that storm subsided, those who had helped, however unwittingly, to raise it, saw nothing on all sides save the ruins of institutions on which the fabric of European society had long rested. Glancing timidly into their own hearts they were confronted there by the counterpart of the exterior wreck,—shattered hopes and enthusiasms turned to bitterness. Then began a literature of despair, giving voice to the *maladie du siècle*,—a brooding melancholy in which settled weariness of soul was deepened by contrast with the beauty, peace, and orderly course of the exterior world.

"Though here a mountain murmur swells
Of many a dark-bough'd pine;
Though as you read you hear the bells
Of the high pasturing kine;
Yet through the hum of torrent lone,
And brooding mountain bee,
There sobs I know not what ground-tone
Of human agony."

Sénancour, from whose *Oberman* these lines are quoted,[1] was one of the inaugurators of this latter-day literature of despair. But with him the feeling was a vague, general one, and he gave it expression in a manner equally vague and general. It was reserved for Goethe to concentrate this feeling in a single passion, the most absorbing of the human heart, and to give that passion a voice whose cry reached to every corner of Europe. The circumstances of the time were propitious. Healthy political life there was none; philosophy and poetry had become all but exclusively introspective. It was an era of absorbing self-consciousness; an era of "beautiful self-reflection," which, according to Schelling, is the soul of romantic poetry. Schlegel mirrored it in *Lucinde*, Jean Paul in *Roquairol*, Byron in *Childe Harold;* but Goethe immortalized it in *Werther*. The chief merit of *Werther* as a work of art is undoubtedly its faithful representation of the moral experiences of the period.[2] It shows the antagonism between that self-will which is prompted by sensuous romanticism, and the restraints of morality; and thus holds up to view one and perhaps the commonest side of the ever-present contest between liberty and necessity, self-assertion and authority, the

[1] The quotation is taken from Dowden, *Studies in Literature*, London, 1878.

[1] Caryle, *Goethe*, in *Miscellaneous Essays*, New York, 1872, vol. i.

new spirit of the Renaissance and the mediæval spirit of self-denial.

On individual character this struggle had then, as now, certain well-known effects. It deepened, in the first place, the contrast between nature's peaceful, orderly course, and the aimless broodings of vacillating minds, the feeble longings of capricious hearts; and it led to settled misanthropism. In the second place, it withdrew these minds and hearts from practical pursuits, and enveloped personal life in a dreamy haze which stimulated imagination and desire while taking away all faculty of action and endeavor. Visions of greatness might come and go with power to tease or irritate, but not to rouse. So long as this dreamy self-isolation remains undisturbed by violent emotion of any kind, there is little danger to either reason or life, however much there may be to religion and morals. It is when some passion starts up and beats furiously against the barriers society and morals have erected, that a catastrophe is imminent. And such in brief is the story and moral of *Werther*.

It has been observed[1] that *Werther* depicts the moral state of the age in which it was published; and it may be now more particularly stated that in some respects it reproduces Goethe's personal experience. He too had suffered from the *maladie du siècle*, and had coquetted with the notion of suicide. In his younger days he had set himself to review the many suicides of classic antiquity, with the intention, as it would seem, of choosing that one as his model which should commend itself to him on the score of its exceptional nobility. He concluded by giving his special approval to Otho's suicide, and determined that whoever could not proceed as Otho

[1] Carlyle, *loc. cit.*

had proceeded, had not acquired the right to renounce life. It is a striking illustration of the objective character of Goethe's mind, that this decision helped in great measure to deter him from carrying out his purpose of suicide, by leading him to perform experiments on himself. Out of a large collection of arms in his possession, he selected a sharp dagger with which he tried to stab himself. But having renewed the attempt for many nights in succession without effect, he at length took to laughing at himself, cast off his melancholy, and vowed to live.

Other and more alarming cries pierced the darkness that shrouded Europe at the close of the last and beginning of the present centuries; cries of earnest men who had battled for human rights and had been defeated; of thoughtful men who had sounded the depths of human life and had touched only sorrow and vanity. Leopardi, surveying the chaotic field of Italian politics, exclaims with benevolent contempt: "I can hardly keep from smiling at the hopes and designs of the men of my time." In tones of mingled despair and mockery he wishes them success, though for his own part, he can no longer concern himself with their aspirations and small achievements. He has only one desire left,—to be with the dead, whose eternal rest he covets.

The key note of Pessimism, sounded in Italy, was taken up and echoed through every part of Germany. But, though nothing could be more gloomy than the view of life taken by the rising school of Schopenhauer and Hartmann, suicide formed no part of the remedy it proposed. That remedy had one ingredient only, the complete destruction of self-will, which, be it emphatically stated, includes will to die as much as will to live.

With regard to suicide Schopenhauer held that, instead of evincing a denial of self-will, it is in reality self-will's strongest affirmation. Its basis is a pronounced egoism. The desire of the suicide is to escape, not from life, but from pain. It is an act of pure selfishness, without one redeeming feature of altruism, without one element of prudence or morality.

> "Noble rebellion lifts a common load,
> But what is he who flings his own load off
> And leaves his fellows toiling."

In these words, George Eliot gives life and force to the condemnation which Pessimism pronounces against suicide.

The remedy for that corroding gloom and discontent to which *Werther* gave expression, was offered under the form of duty by Carlyle, some fifty years after the birth of young Germany, and is couched in these words: "Let him who gropes painfully in darkness and uncertain light, and prays vehemently that the dawn may ripen into day, lay this * * precept well to heart: Do the duty which lies nearest to thee." By Browning a remedy for the same evil is discovered in human love. The hero in *Pauline*, goaded to desperation by his unhappiness, reveals his heart to the woman who loves him, and lo! he is safe in a haven of rest, having found in her true sympathy the hope and courage he so sorely needed.

> "I am very weak,
> But what I would express is,—Leave me not,
> Sit still by me with beating breast and hair
> Loosened, be watching earnest by my side,
> Turning my books, or kissing me when I
> Look up—like summer wind! Be still to me
> A key to music's mystery when mind fails—
> A reason, a solution, and a clue."

Both here and in *Paracelsus*, the great poet calms all inordinate passions, and points to the world as a school wherein trials are to be endured with courage and hope, for they are the schoolmasters that lead us to God.

The great English novelist of our own day, who, in her conception of the moral forces which sway the lives of mortals, approaches the level of Sophocles, finds the ground of reconciliation between self-will and moral law in the simple lesson taught by the cross of Christ,—the lesson of complete self-surrender to the will of God. This is what the Frate teaches Romola in these quiet, pathetic words: "The higher life begins for us, my daughter, when we renounce our own will to bow before a divine law. That seems hard to you. It is the portal of wisdom and freedom and blessedness. And the symbol of it hangs before you. That wisdom is the religion of the cross."

CHAPTER IV.

Suicide and Roman Law.

THE Greek and Roman laws, regarding the citizen in the light of his value to the State, punished suicide as a political offence, when they punished it at all. Already legal penalties were in force against it in the age of Plato and Aristotle. Plato, asking, "What shall be the punishment of those who shorten their days, compelled to it neither by a judgment of the city nor by some great, sudden, and inevitable misfortune, but through timidity and sloth?" answered, in the spirit of these penalties, that such offenders shall be buried unhonored in some lonely spot, where neither monument nor mark of any kind shall be placed to indicate their graves.[1] But he exempted from this sentence, and indeed justified, suicides committed to escape the crime of sacrilege,[2] or to cut short a lingering and painful illness.[3] Aristotle made no exception of any kind in favor of suicide. He considered it eminently proper that every citizen who killed himself should be treated with ignominy and shorn of power to entail his property.[4]

[1] *Laws*, B. ix. Toward the close of B. x, allusion is made to extreme punishment inflicted on suicides in the regions of the dead.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] *Republic*, B. iii. In our own day the Manchester school of materialists would make this a legal cause of suicide. See *Euthanasia*, by S. D. Williams, Jr., London, 1873.

[4] *Ethics*, v.

The legal punishment of suicide in the Greek States was this: No honors were allowed to the memory of the deceased; his name was branded with infamy; his body, subjected to indignities, was not to be cremated, as was the honored custom throughout Greece, but interred under ground in some lonely and unfrequented spot, like the bodies of conspirators, traitors, tyrants, sacrilegious wretches, and criminals generally, whose allotted punishment was impalement alive on a cross.[1] By Athenian law, moreover, the hand which had done the deed was to be lopped off and buried away from its parent body.[2]

But, whilst visiting the severest penalties on all who assumed and acted upon the right to dispose of their own lives, the Greek communities, or at least some of them, instituted tribunals for the hearing of persons who contemplated suicide, and for authorizing their deaths should the reasons submitted be deemed sufficient. In Athens the Areopagus had this discretionary power.[3] In the Ionian colony of Marseilles the Council of Six Hundred kept a poisonous beverage of hemlock for administration to all whose reasons for quitting this life met with their approval.[4] At Ceos, one of the Cyclades in the Ægean Sea, there was a law obliging all its inhabitants over sixty years of age to put a period to their lives by drinking poppy or hemlock juice, in order to make room for the growing generation.[5] Ælian describes the aged Cæans as-

[1] Potter, *Greek Antiquities*, B. iv, c. i. Ælian, *Hist. Var.*, l. iv, c. vii.

[2] Petiti, *Commentar. in Leges Atticas.*

[3] Le Gendre, *Traité de l' Opinion*, t. ii, last chapter.

[4] The Phocians are supposed to have brought this custom to Marseilles A. U. C. 164.

[5] *Strabo*, l. x. It seems this law was only enforced in times of impending famine. Heraclidus (*De Rebus Publicis*), without affirming the existence of such a law, repeats the statement regarding the suicide of the aged at Ceos.

sembled together with wreaths on their heads to drink hemlock and end lives which had become profitless to the State.[1]

There is nowhere extant any authorized statement of the reasons which were deemed sufficient to justify the granting of leave to commit suicide; but their general character may be inferred from what some writers of antiquity have said on the subject. Valerius Maximus describes an incident that occurred while he was with Sextus Pompeius in Asia, which throws some light on this point. An aged lady of distinction appeared before the magistrates and obtained their sanction to her intended suicide, on the ground that she feared some reverse of fortune might deprive her of the uniform health and happiness she had hitherto enjoyed during the ninety years of her life.[2] In the fourth pleading of Quintilian, entitled *Pro Filio*, a son is represented as asking leave to shorten his days because some astrologer had said that he was predestined to kill his father. He reminds the court of his ability to take his own life without their sanction, but humbly acknowledges that by such a deed he would risk legal penalties which he was unwilling to incur. In the sixth declamation of Libanius, a man is introduced who asks leave of the senate to swallow the fatal hemlock, giving for reason his desire to be freed from the nuisance of a talkative wife. Were he a free agent in the matter, he says, a rope and the nearest tree would have already ended his troubles; but since the State has reserved the right over life and death, he dutifully appeals to it for license to kill himself. Several other declamations by this orator are on the same topic; and,

[1] *Historiæ Variæ*, l. ii, c. xxxvii.

[2] L. ii, ch. vi.

though the persons and incidents described are probably fictitious, they doubtless give a true account of the excuses for shortening life which were pleaded before the special legal tribunals of the ancients.[1]

Leucas, or Leucadia, was famous for its suicides in pagan times. At the southwestern extremity of that island there stood a broken white cliff having on its summit a temple dedicated to Apollo. Close by was a place of public execution. This was also the customary resort of lover-suicides, on which account it was called the Lover's Leap. Here Sappho, Artemisia, and other celebrities are believed to have ended their lives and the pangs of unrequited love, by leaping into the sea. These suicides were usually witnessed by crowds of people; the law did not interfere with them, and they were celebrated in history and poetry. But, as a rule, when suicide was committed without State license, and especially when it threatened to become epidemic, the law interfered. One noted occasion of this interference arose when the Milesian virgins took to hanging themselves in large numbers despite the tears and entreaties of friends and parents. The superstitious populace ascribed the epidemic to a special visitation of the gods; but the magistrates of Miletus, inspired by the counsel of a wise man, took a rational view of it, and passed a decree ordering that all virgin suicides should be carried naked through the market-place. "The passage of this law," says Plutarch, "not only inhibited but quashed their desire of killing themselves."[2] A decree of Tarquin the Proud, previously referred to, was equally successful in arresting the spread of a suicide epidemic among his Roman

[1] Moore, *Full Inquiry*, vol. i, pp. 239, 240.

[2] Plutarch, *Morals, Concerning Virtuous Women*, Boston, 1870, vol. i, p. 354. Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Attici*, l. xv, c. x.

troops. It was called forth by the special emergency of the case, and with this emergency passed away.[1]

It is not certain that any written law against suicide existed during the Roman Republic,[2] though the probabilities are that the Twelve Tables contained such a law; and we have the statement of Seneca, the rhetorician, that in the early days of the Republic, the bodies of suicides were denied burial.[3]

To estimate the respective influences of Stoicism and Christianity on Roman legislation against suicide, it will be advisable to begin with St. Augustin. Before the *City of God* appeared, suicide had been condemned by many fathers of the church; but their verdicts, not being based on a uniform and stable principle, were wanting in unanimity. During the fourth and fifth centuries, however, and mainly through the instrumentality of St. Augustin, the reprobation of the Christian Church against suicide was first declared in a manner at once absolute and dogmatic.[4] It will be advisable to state the substance of his teaching here, even at the risk of repeating a part of what has been said already.[5]

The virtue which makes life good has its throne in the soul, whence it rules the members of the body. While this virtue remains firm, nothing done on or to the body is any fault of the person that suffers, provided escape be impossible. The virgins who killed themselves to escape pollution are entitled to our sympathy; but those who refrained from killing themselves, lest in escaping the crime of another they should commit a sin of their

[1] Pliny, *Hist. Nat.*, l. xxxvi, c. xv.

[2] Montesquieu, *Esprit des Lois*, l. xxix, c. ix. [3] *Controversies*, l. viii, 4.

[4] Felix Bourquélot, *Recherches & Bibliothèque de l' École des Chartres*, vol. viii.

[5] See p. 73, *et seq.*

own, are certainly not to be condemned. It is not lawful to usurp the right to kill even a guilty person. He who kills himself is a homicide, and so much the more guilty of his own death the more he was innocent of the offence for which he doomed himself to die. By despairing of God's mercy and cutting off all hope of repentance, Judas aggravated his crime of betraying Christ. The Christian has no authority for committing suicide in any circumstances whatever: neither for the sin of another, for this would be to escape a guilt which could not pollute him by incurring great guilt of his own; nor for his own past sins, since he has all the more need of this life for repentance; nor to obtain that better life we hope for after death, for they who die by their own hands have no better life after this one. It is not lawful to commit suicide to escape falling into sin. If it were, then instead of exhorting the newly-baptized to virginal purity or matrimonial fidelity, they should be advised to go kill themselves; but this would be folly and madness. Some there are who appeal to the example of Cato, saying that what so excellent and learned a man did must be right. But did not Cato's own friends try to dissuade him, and consequently must not they have believed that he was displaying weakness of soul in preferring death to hardship? If it be said that Cato thought it disgraceful to live under the rule of Cæsar, why did he urge his son to submit to that rule and to trust in the conqueror's generosity? The conduct of Regulus is far nobler than that of Cato; Regulus, who preferred all the horrors of captivity among the Carthaginians to death by his own hand. Pagans affect to be offended because Christians prefer the example of Job and the saints to that of Cato, forgetting how their own books exalt the noble conduct

of Regulus. Turning to the schools of philosophy, and more particularly to the Stoic school, he tells them all that they display "marvellous shallowness" by seeking happiness in this life and themselves, for that this life is a scene of perpetual striving against evil. How can the Stoic philosophy consistently ignore the ills of life and at the same time exhort the wise man to commit suicide when they grievously assail him? "But such is the stupid pride of these men who fancy that the supreme good can be found in this life, and that they can become happy by their own resources; that their wise man, or at least the man whom they fancifully depict as such, is always happy, even though he become blind, deaf, dumb, mutilated, racked with pains, or suffer any conceivable calamity such as may compel him to make away with himself; and they are not ashamed to call the life that is beset with these evils happy. O happy life, that seeks the aid of death to end it! If it is happy, let the wise man remain in it; but if these ills drive him out of it, in what sense is it happy?" The Christian, on the contrary, holds life eternal to be the supreme good, and death eternal the supreme evil; that to escape the one and obtain the other he must live rightly; and that to live rightly he must depend, not on his own strength, but on the grace of God.[1]

The last instalment of the *City of God* was given to the world, A. D. 426; and although more than a century elapsed after its publication before the Institutes and Digest were promulgated, these latter came forth absolutely unaffected by the eloquence of St. Augustin. The reason is not far to seek. The fundamental ideas of pa-

[1] *The City of God*, translated in *Anti-Nicene Christian Library*, by Rev. Marcus Dods, Edinburgh, 1871, vol. i, ch. xvi, *et seq.*

gan legislation were essentially Stoic. The Stoic philosophy took firm root in Rome after the conquest of Greece, and reached the summit of its popularity in the legal profession itself, during the era of the Antonines,—"the golden age of Roman jurisprudence."[1] Now the influence of Stoicism on Roman jurisprudence is not so evident in special details as in the fundamental idea of a law of nature prior to all local or conventional laws, and claiming superior allegiance on grounds of antiquity and universality. And a clause, so to speak, of this universal law of nature granted to every man, in the opinion of the Stoics, the power to dispose of his own life; for such is the license expressed in the then current Stoic maxim, *Mori licet cui vivere non placcat:* Death is permitted to him who does not choose to live.[2] Hence, neither the Justinian nor the Theodosian Code contains a single law approximating in any way to the Christian theory of suicide, nor abrogating, nor even modifying the uniform legislation on the subject of pagandom within the confines of the Roman Empire. The Theodosian Code, indeed, contains no prohibition whatever of suicide, while the Justinian Code treats it with the easy indulgence characteristic of pagan jurisprudence.

An investigation of the body of Roman law reveals the fact that suicide was there expressly legitimized for certain specified causes, namely:

(1) Disgust of life,—*Tædium vitæ.*
(2) Impatience of sickness or bodily pain.
(3) Grief caused by loss of relatives or loved ones.

[1] Maine, *Ancient Law*, New York, 1871, p. 54.

[2] The Code and Digest, though united under a Christian emperor, are pagan. They were not modified by the lawyers charged to collate them. The Institutes of Justinian were promulgated Nov. 21, 533 A.D.; the Digest Dec. 16th, in the same year.

(4) Disgrace consequent upon insolvency.
(5) Desire of posthumous fame.
(6) Fury.
(7) Madness.

When a suicide could be traced to one or more of these causes, the succession of the deceased obtained, for it was decreed that if any one killed himself from disgust of life or impatience of any pain whatever, his goods passed to his heirs in accordance with the decision of the divine Antoninus.[1] Under Hadrian the benefit of this law was extended to a father who should kill himself after murdering his son, it being held that a self-inflicted death in such a circumstance is to be attributed to parental grief.[2] In all sections declaratory of the circumstances under which, in case of suicide, the succession shall not obtain, the causes enumerated above are invariably excepted. It is uniformly provided that the goods of those who end their lives from any of those causes, shall pass to the heirs-at-law by either testamentary or intestate succession,

On the other hand, suicide was not legal if committed (1) without appreciable cause, (2) in consequence of remorse for a criminal deed, and (3) of a determination to escape sentence. If a prisoner in durance vile died a natural death, his goods were inherited. If he killed himself, his jailor had to expiate the punishment due his offence.[3] If, being under indictment for a crime, or seized *in scelere*, he committed suicide, his goods were confiscated to the fiscus; for it was held that by his suicide he had made avowal of guilt.[4] For this consequence to follow, however, the crime for which the person was in-

[1] See Appendix, B. i.
[2] See Appendix, B. ii.
[3] *Digest*, L. xlviii, t. iii, l. 14.
[4] See Appendix, B. iii.

dicted must be one punishable by either death, banishment,[1] or confiscation of goods.[2] If the crime were of minor degree, such as assault or robbery, and the accused committed suicide, the succession of goods obtained as though, after adverse judgment had been rendered, he had died a natural death.[3] It was a rule also that if the indicted person killed himself before trial his heirs could inherit, provided they went into court on the same indictment and obtained an acquittal.[4] What would seem a special law declares that if a husband, after making a bequest to his wife, kills himself through remorse for some criminal act, the bequest shall be annulled, though bequests to other persons shall remain valid, provided they were not made in view of such a mode of death.

The natural right of slaves over their own lives was also acknowledged by Roman law. It was declared that the infliction by a slave of a wound on himself did not affect his money value any more than if he had killed himself, for the law of nature permits even slaves to shorten their lives.[5] Nevertheless, out of regard for the interests of the master, the law annulled the sale of a slave who should attempt suicide soon after his purchase. It was held that such a slave was bad, because if he could be guilty of attempting his own life he could be guilty of attempting the lives of others.[6]

If a man in the Roman military service killed himself through any of the justifiable causes of suicide, his will was good. If he recovered from an attempt at suicide and could not prove any one of these causes, he was pun-

[1] See Appendix, B. iv.
[2] See Appendix, B. v.
[3] See Appendix, B. vi.
[4] Bourquelot. *op. cit.*, p. 545.
[5] See Appendix, B. viii.
[6] See Appendix, B. ix.

ished with death. The will of a military man whose suicide was consequent upon remorse for breach of military law was annulled.[1]

On a comparison of Greek with Roman law in the matter of suicide, it appears that the same causes justified it in both.[2] But at this point the close agreement between them ceases. The penalties inflicted by the Greek States were chiefly ecclesiastical in their nature, while those of the Roman Empire were exclusively civil. In dealing with illegal suicide, Roman jurisprudence, except in the case of military men, restricted its punishment to confiscation of goods. The law applicable to military suicides was obviously intended for purposes of military discipline. The circumstance out of which the laws against the suicide of criminals and persons under grave indictments grew, shows that their motive was purely fiscal. Under the first emperors the great Roman families were so menaced with destruction by criminal prosecutions, that it became customary among them to prevent the consequences of adverse judgments, whether pending or actually pronounced, by recourse to a voluntary death; and as at that time there was no law against such deaths, they did not bar the succession of goods. But as this custom was seen to divert large treasure from the imperial fiscus, the law above quoted was enacted, whereby the fiscus secured the forfeit for all crimes, the penalty of which was loss of possessions. Having secured this, Roman law was content; but Greek law, on the contrary, pursued the suicide after this life with mutilation of his body, deprivation of funeral rites, and eternal disgrace.

[1] See Appendix, B. x.

[2] An exception is found in Lacedæmon, which condemned pusillanimity in any form, and under all circumstances, as the greatest of crimes.

It is important to bear this distinction in mind in any attempt to trace the connection between the custom of the Christian Church in this matter, and the practice of the Greek and Roman societies in which the infancy of the church was passed. Roman law never having pronounced any ecclesiastical censures on the bodies of suicides, it may seem the only possible conclusion that these censures must have flowed to the church from either Greek or barbaric sources. Now, it may be confidently stated that neither among the Scandinavian, the Teutonic, nor the Celtic communities, as these stood prior to their subjection to the influence of the Catholic Church, was there any of that horror of suicide which should have existed among them to account for any, however little, influence they may be supposed to have had on canonical legislation. But, however it may have been with the practice of the church in this regard; whether or no it seems likely that this practice was influenced in whole or in part by ancient Greek or barbaric custom, it is certain that her doctrine on the matter was all her own. At one stroke she swept away the foundation on which the pagan world had built its dictum of *Mori licet cui vivere non placeat*, and proclaimed that *suicide is a true homicide and a mortal sin.* (Est vere homicidia et reus homicidii qui, se interfeciendo, innocentem hominem interfecerit. * * * *Canon.* 23, *quæst.* 4. See also Labb. *Concil.*, t. v, p. 8, edit. 1728, for the declaration of the Council of Arles, A.D. 452, stigmatizing suicide as a mortal sin.)

CHAPTER V.

Suicide and Canon Law.

It was customary among the early Christians to make such pious offerings at the altars of the faith as their means justified, or to cause them to be made after their demise. From this sacred privilege the church excluded various classes of offenders, among whom she numbered criminals killed *in scelere*, and suicides or *Biathanati*, on the ground that they had died in mortal sin. After a while the rigor of this rule was relaxed so far as to allow oblations on behalf of persons killed in the actual commission of a crime, a concession based on the charitable belief that they would have repented had they lived; but the rule remained inflexible against suicides, as appears from a decree of the second Council of Orleans in 533, which declares that "the oblations of those who were killed in the commission of any crime may be received, except of such as laid violent hands on themselves."[1]

Some persons having been allowed through official ignorance or carelessness to usurp the privileges denied in this canon, it was reaffirmed in the Council of Braga,

[1] Moore, *Full Inquiry*, vol. i, p. 299. *Concilium Aurelianense Secundum An. Christi* 533, Canon xv, De oblationibus interfectorum. *Collect. Maxima Conciliorum*, vol. iv.

A. D. 563, with the additions that suicides were not to be remembered at the oblation of the mass, that they were to have no burial service, and that no hymns were to be sung at their graves. They were to share this condemnation with those who underwent capital punishment for their crimes.[1] These penalties were again reaffirmed by the Councils of Auxerre in 578,[2] and of Troyes in 886,[3] and by Pope Nicholas I, in his reply to the deputation from the Bulgarian Christians that waited on him in the ninth century. This deputation submitted to him a number of questions on points of ecclesiastical discipline, among them two on the question of self-murder; namely, whether suicides should be buried, and whether the sacrifice of the mass should be offered up for their souls. Pope Nicholas answered that their bodies must be buried lest they become offensive to the living; but not with the usual burial ceremonies, in order that the horror of their deed may be deeply impressed on the public mind. If there be any who, impelled by feelings of humanity, desire to show some mark of respect at the graves of suicides, they may do so as a relief to their personal feelings, nothing more. Under no circumstance is any sacrifice to be offered up for him who has not only died in mortal sin, but inflicted that end on himself. No one more effectually accomplishes the sin unto death, for which the apostle John declares we are not to pray, than he who, in imitation of Judas and at the instigation of the devil, murders himself.[4]

In the foregoing canonical decrees, there is no condemnation of unsuccessful attempts at suicide, the church

[1] See Appendix, C. i.

[2] Moore, *op. cit.*, vol. i, p. 300. *Concil. Antisidorense*, Canon, xvii. *Coll. Maxima Concil.*, vol. v.

[3] See Appendix, C. ii.

[4] See Appendix; C. iii.

leaving those who were guilty of such to their better selves, in the hope that they would repent, and in the belief that the remorse they must necessarily suffer would be penalty enough for their crime. But in her legislation against actual suicide, which began with the Council of Arles in the middle of the fifth century, she is positive and uncompromising, in principle admitting no excuse for the deed, not even that of disease. In practice, however, the extreme rigor of canon law was occasionally relaxed in favor af suicides committed by members of the monastic orders. Heron, an aged monk who killed himself, was allowed Christian burial in consideration of his exemplary life and long services in the cause of religion (Cæsar, *Dialog.*, cap. xliv). But, as a rule, suicides were given up as lost for all eternity, though insane suicides would be saved, provided they had led godly lives up to the time of their insanity.

In the Penitential of Archbishop Theodore, soon to be noticed, there is a vague attempt at a classification of suicides into the insane, the impulsive, and the deliberate, and at the same time a tendency to apportion ecclesiastical penalties so as to make them accord with the responsibilities of each class respectively; but the insane are still made subject to a degree of moral reprobation as vessels and instruments of the devil. The full import of this classification, and not only this, but the revolution it has contributed to effect in modern opinion, custom, and legislation with regard to suicide, are results of the scientific spirit of the present century.

Before going further into the history of suicide in the Christian Church, we may pause a little while to consider its place in the great protest against idolatry which began in Arabia at the close of the seventh century. The

Koran, foundation of Mohammedan law and religion, contains many censures, both explicit and implied, on the act of self-murder. To some of these reference has been already made. But although the Koran is generally regarded as the sole law of Mohammedanism, it is in reality but the foundation of that law. It stands in the same relation to the Mohammedan codes that the Old Testament does to the Talmud. The accretion of the more general body of Moslem law around the *Suras* of the Koran, has been the work of many centuries, and is a result of the same principle which presided over the development of Jewish law and custom out of the text and interpretation of sacred Scripture. In point of fact, the Koran, in its original and unedited form, was only adapted to a simple people with social relations of a primitive character. It no longer sufficed to them after they had diffused themselves abroad, at first as conquerors on a scale of rare magnitude, and afterward as traders, merchants, literati, founding an empire and a civilization in many respects superior to any thing the contemporary world could show. Wherefore the first Caliphs appended to it the Oral or Traditional Law, applicable to the settlement of cases which grew out of a more complicated state of society than had been foreseen in the *Suras*. As this Oral Law was the product of a haphazard growth,—its constituent parts having gravitated together without either system, or agreement with what had gone before or was likely to come after,—the Caliphs followed the precedent of the Emperors Theodosius and Justinian with respect to the accumulated store of Roman law; they commissioned a body of Mohammedan jurists to arrange it critically according to their own most approved method of classification, under the title of "The Six Revered Books."

The approved classification was: (1) Laws publicly known and accepted in the first three ages of Islam; (2) Oral laws little known in the first century but better known in the two next succeeding centuries; (3) Private laws little known in the first and two next succeeding centuries; (4) Laws of feeble tradition.

There were now two depositories of Mohammedan law, the Koran and the Six Books. But more followed; for besides these, a third deposit accumulated, under a form comparable to our common law, in the *Fetvas*, or formal decisions on legal questions that came more or less frequently before the Sheik-ul-Islam.

Now all this accumulation of mandate, interpretation, and decision, passed by inheritance into the hands of the Ottoman Sultans, under whose command it was codified, and entitled the "Pearl," a fanciful name indicating the precious character of its contents. This code underwent a complete revision in the reign of Solyman the Magnificent,[1] and receiving in this its revised form the title "Confluence of the Seas," became the supreme law of the Ottoman Empire.[2]

Hardly any thing is more striking in this body of law than the sanctity it attaches to human life. It declares that, "every thing which afflicts the human race, every thing which destroys the work of God is a great evil"; that "our holy Prophet having said, 'Man is the work of God,' accursed therefore be he who destroys that work." To this anathema, war is the only exception; war which "exalts the word of God, glorifies the faith, and dissipates political evils." Soldiers of the crescent who laid down their lives on the field of battle went in-

[1] A. D. 1520 to 1566.

[2] D'Ohsson, *Le Tableau de l'Empire Othoman*, Paris, 1791.

stantly to Paradise. What, then, of Mussulmans who died by their own hands? The answer to this question seems to involve a severer condemnation of this deed than was even pronounced by the Christian Church, since it paints suicide in colors still darker than homicide (*ante*, p. 76). But it cannot be said that such is really the fact until all doubt is removed on the point as to whether homicide is as heinous a crime in Islam as in the Church of Christ. The annals of her royal dynasties tend to show that with all her reprobation of suicide she is open to a charge of laxity in her estimate of the guilt of murder.

Returning now to the canonical decrees traced in the preceding pages, they lead us down the stream of time to the close of the feudal ages, at which period the question of suicide began to occupy the attention of the civil government of Western Europe. It first appears in the capitularies of Charlemagne and Louis the Pious; but these do little more than echo the decrees of the church. Some slight consideration for the souls of suicides is noticeable in one of these capitularies, which, though it declares they shall not have the benefit of oblations and masses, "because the judgments of God are inscrutable, and no one can fathom the depths of His counsels," nevertheless permits alms-giving and the recitation of the psalms in their favor.[1] A second capitulary, preserved by Baluze, and dating from a short time after the death of Charlemagne, breathes out more of the uncompromising spirit of ecclesiastical law. It decrees that no oblation shall be made in honor of suicides, or of criminals who have suffered death for their crimes, and that their bodies shall not be buried with chant of psalms.[2] This capitulary associates suicides with criminals. Presently we shall

[1] See Appendix, C. iv.

[2] See Appendix, C. v.

find the same classification adopted in England under the Saxon King Edgar.

The transmarine canons were adopted in England at the Council of Hereford, held A. D. 673, under Theodore,[1] Archbishop of Canterbury, by which act the decree of the Council of Orleans against receiving the oblations of suicides, and that of the Council of Braza refusing them Christian burial, became constituent parts of the ecclesiastical law of the country. The Penitential, or ritual, drawn up by Archbishop Theodore for the better instruction of the English branch of the church in these transmarine decrees, contains a chapter concerning "those possessed by the devil, and those who kill themselves," in which the following passage occurs: "If any one be so tormented by the devil as to run to and fro, scarce knowing what he does, and in that situation of mind should kill himself, it is proper to pray for such an one, provided he were previous to such possession a religious man. But, if he kill himself through despair, through any timidity, or from causes unknown, let us leave his judgment to God, and not dare to pray (say mass) for such an one. It is not lawful to say mass for one who hath voluntarily killed himself, but only to pray and bestow alms on his behalf. But some allow mass to be said for one who, impelled by a sudden temptation, seems to have murdered himself through an instantaneous distraction."[2] The same penalty was reaffirmed in the Penitential of Egbert, who was Archbishop of York from 734 to 766,[3] and was made the basis of a

[1] Theodore of Tarsus, dispatched from Rome, A. D. 668, as Archbishop of Canterbury.

[2] Moore, *Full Inquiry*, vol. i, p. 307, quoting from *Pœnitentiale Theodori Archiep. Cantaur.*, Cap. x, Paris ed., 1677.

[3] See Appendix, C. vi.

law against suicide by the Saxon King Edgar in the year 967.[1] King Edgar's law adopts the received classification of suicides with robbers, murderers, and traitors, and visits the same penalty on the bodies of all indiscriminately. As to the Universal Church herself, she confirmed all her previous legislation on suicide at the Council of Nîmes, held in 1184, and there renewed her anathemas on the crime.[2]

Less than a century before the Council of Nîmes, Abelard had reasserted the Platonic doctrine of the criminality of suicide without divine permission (Sic et Non. Ch., "Quod licet homini inferri sibi manus aliquibus de causis, et contra"); and, within a century after, Thomas Aquinas, one of the greatest prodigies of learning and method that the western church has produced, summed up the reasons for the criminality of suicide under the three following heads: (1) It is contrary to natural law which endows each individual with the feeling of self-love and the desire to preserve the life of the body. (2) It is contrary to divine and human law, both of which punish it. It is a crime not only against the State, but also against God. (3) It is a usurpation of the prerogative of God, who is the sole arbiter of life and death.[3]

In that conflict of interests and opinions, including the theory regarding suicide, which now began to spring up between the church and the world, plastic art lent her valuable aid to the former, and in the sacred temple of Notre Dame de Paris, as elsewhere, taught by graven marble the repulsiveness and sinfulness of suicide.[4]

[1] See Appendix, C. vii.

[2] Bourquelot, *op. cit.*

[3] *Summa. Theolog.*, quæst. lxiv, art. v; et quæst. lix, iii.

[4] Bourquelot, *op. cit.*

Later still, when the rebellious spirit against the authority of the church was growing stronger and more popular, the great Italian poet endeavored to impress upon a skeptical world the shame and disgrace of self-inflicted death, by consigning its victims to the seventh circle of his hell. Here Dante places the souls of Pietro della Vigna, Chancellor of the great Emperor, Frederick II, Leno, who purposely sought death on the battle field, and a mysterious suicide, whose name he does not mention.[1]

[1] *Divine Comedy*, Longfellow's translation, Canto xiii. The suicide of Pietro della Vigna is more than doubtful; see Napier, *Florentine Hist.*, I, 197; but Dante believed it, and makes him say:

> "My spirit, in disdainful exultation,
> Thinking by dying to escape disdain,
> Made me unjust against myself, the just."

Boccaccio alludes to the frequency of suicide by hanging in the city of Florence about this time. See note to 150, Canto xiii, Longfellow's *Dante*.

CHAPTER VI.

Suicide and Modern Law.

HITHERTO the penalties inflicted for suicide, since the establishment of Christianity, had been wholly ecclesiastical; but in 1270, during the reign of St. Louis, of France, the State began to take special cognizance of this crime, and in addition to the spiritual pains inflicted by the church, enforced the old Roman penalty of confiscation of personal property. This penalty, however, instead of going as formerly to swell the imperial treasury, escheated to the baron.

Two systems of jurisprudence seem to have divided France from the accession of the house of Valois-Angoulême down to the near approach of the Revolution, the *Droit Ecrit* and the *Droit Coutumier*.[1] The former had Roman law for basis, while the latter was the result of local customs which had not outgrown the influences of their barbaric origin. The penalties inflicted for suicide varied correspondingly in different sections of the land. While in some sections the tribunals enforced only Roman and canonical law, in others customary law prevailed; and in a third, or, as it may be called, neutral section, the *Droit Ecrit* was mingled with the *Droit Coutumier* in proportions more or less equal. Wherever the customary pun-

[1] Maine, *Ancient Law*, p. 80.

ishments prevailed, the treatment of suicides was nothing short of barbarous. In parts of France and Switzerland, notably in Brittany, Lille, and Geneva, the body of the suicide was extracted from the apartment in which it was found, through a temporary opening. The door of the house was not used for this purpose, because a curse would rest on its threshold forever after. When extracted, the body was dragged on hurdles, or, quite as often, on the bare ground, with face down, to the place of public execution, where it was suspended by the feet for a while, and then thrown upon the highway to be devoured by animals. All this was done in addition to confiscation of personal effects.[1] Moreover, at Lille the bodies of female suicides were burnt as a special and an additional punishment.[2] In Zurich, besides the indignity of trailing the dead body of the suicide along the ground to the place of execution, certain other customs prevailed. If the suicide had killed himself with a poignard, an instrument of the same kind was stuck in a post, or tree, at the head of his grave. If he had come to his death by drowning in the sea, he was buried five feet from its shore; if in a well, he was interred on the side of a mountain with a stone on his head, another on his middle, and a third on his feet.[3] In the majority of places in which the *Droit Coutumier* prevailed, the finer distinctions made by the Roman law were overlooked. The judges, whose jurisdiction was invoked in cases of suicide, considered only the bare fact of self-inflicted death, and, treating the suicide as a crim-

[1] *Bibliothèque de l'Ecole des Chartres*, t. iv, p. 264; V. C. B. D'Argentré, *Commentarii in consuetudines ducatus Brittaniæ*, tit. xxiv, cal. 2,055; Lisle, *op. cit.*, p. 407.

[2] *Loc. cit.*, t. iv, p. 266; Roisin, *Franchises, Lois, et Coutumes de la ville de Lille*, p. 121.

[3] Michilet, *Origines du droit française*, p. 371; Lisle, *op. cit.*, p. 409.

inal, confiscated his goods, pronounced sentence on his body, and subjected it to the execution of justice. Boutilier would punish civilly even the intention to commit suicide.[1] Jousse states that this was sometimes actually done; and that at any time during five years after burial, the cadaver of a suspected suicide could be disinterred for trial.[2] In Toulouse,[3] Provence,[4] and one or more localities besides, the decisions of Roman law were reversed, and, while the goods of a suicide were not confiscated if his felonious act were owing to loss of interest in life, or impatience of suffering, his body was suspended and afterward thrown on the highway. The source of these judgments of the *Droit Coutumier* is indicated by a passage which Bouhier discovered in an ancient manuscript, and which declares the archaic customs of Bourgogne in dealing with suicides. The passage states that the practice was for the lord of the jurisdiction to pass sentence on the cadaver as though it were the body of a murderer (the suicide being, in fact, a murderer of himself), and to confiscate his goods to his suzerain.[5] In Normandy it was the custom to abide more by the decisions of Roman law, in so far at least as to make a distinction between suicides committed to escape the disgrace of a legal penalty, on the one hand, or the pain of some violent grief, on the other, with a view to enforce confiscation of goods upon the former alone. The significant reason given for this practical distinction is,

[1] *Somme Rurale*, l. i, fol. 66 et 144, et l. ii, fol. 199; *Bibliothèque de l' Ecole des Chartres*, t. iv, p. 262.

[2] Jousse, *Traité de Matière Criminelle*, t. iv, p. 134; Lisle, *op. cit.*, p. 409.

[3] Bretonnier, *Observations sur Henris*, t. ii, p. 903 (Ed. 1708), cited in Lisle, *op. cit.*, p. 406.

[4] Jousse, *op. cit.*, p. 137, cited in Lisle, *loc. cit.*

[5] See Appendix, D. i.

that extreme grief so disorders reason as to leave the distracted person no longer master of himself.[1]

The discovery of the Pandects, in 1135, gave a new impetus to the study of Roman jurisprudence throughout Southern Europe, and Charles V made it the basis of the legal system of his vast dominions. A decree of the constitutions of this monarch relative to suicide declares that if a person commits it to escape the consequences due his crimes, his goods shall be forfeited to the baron; but they shall pass to his heirs if his death be the result of bodily or mental infirmity, or of a desire to escape flogging. But in any case, no Christian burial was allowed.[2]

The customary laws of France were superseded by the general ordinance of 1670, which gave more uniformity to French criminal jurisprudence. In that ordinance, suicide was affiliated to treason against God and the king, and its punishment was not any less severe than formerly. The bodies of suicides were to be dragged to the places of public execution, their faces to the ground, where they were to be suspended by the feet; and they were to be denied any form of burial. The penalty of confiscation of goods, omitted in the decisions of some of the old Parliaments, was here enforced in every instance.[3] No case was exempt from the full rigor of this punishment unless there had been unmistakable lunacy.[4] The punishment inflicted on the suicide Portier, in Paris, some time in 1749, was used then for almost, if not quite, the last time in France. The cadaver of this man was

[1] *Coutumes de Normandie*, ch. ix, art. 149, cited in Lisle, *op. cit.*, p. 405.

[2] Jousse, cited in Lisle, p. 407.

[3] It is said that the ladies of the court of Versailles in the reign of Louis XIV, used to obtain the legacies of suicides for pin-money.

[4] Jousse, *loc. cit.*, p. 131; Serpillon, *loc. cit.*, p. 964; Lisle, *op. cit.*, pp. 410, 411.

dragged through the streets of the city, with its face scraping the ground, to the place of common execution, where it was suspended by its feet during twenty-four hours, after which it was cut down and cast upon the highway. His goods were confiscated. It was to these laws Montesquieu alluded when he stigmatized them as furious and unjust.

Such was the state in which Bayle and Voltaire found the legal punishment of suicide at a time when France was in a ferment with revolutionary ideas. Among many other remnants of mediævalism which the Revolution swept away, is to be counted the entire mass of anti-suicide legislation, in place of which it substituted the Greek and Roman doctrine of the natural right of every man over his own life. In the spirit of this doctrine the Code Napoleon contains no legislation whatever on the subject.

The law of the Anglo-Saxon King Edgar against suicide, previously alluded to, was wholly ecclesiastical in character. It is probable that the first civil mandate against this crime was introduced by the Danes, who are believed to have established it after their invasion of Britain in 1013. It runs as follows: "Let him who hath murdered himself, be fined in all his goods to his lord: let him find a place of burial neither in the church nor church-yard; unless ill health and madness drove him to the perpetration."[1] Another law, declared in the reign of Henry III, is both full and specific. It bears ample evidence, in its first provision more particularly, of having been founded on Roman law. This provision, however, fell into disuse because of the masculine justice of English jurisprudence which would have no one convicted or attainted by his own confession, but only by

[1] Wilkins, *Leges Saxonicæ*, p. 90, in Moore, *op. cit.*, vol. i, p. 310.

due process of law. The two last provisions have remained the same ever since. "A person," this statute declares, "who murders himself, being accused of or caught in the commission of any heinous crime (for which if he had lived to be condemned, he would have forfeited every thing), shall have no heir; because the killing himself is equivalent to a confession or conviction of his guilt. But if a man kill himself when under no charge of a crime, he is allowed to have an heir; because as no felony was supposed to precede his death, there could be no presumptive conviction of criminality by his death. Yet he who kills himself through weariness of life, or impatience of pain and grief, shall forfeit all his movable or personal estate, though he is permitted to have an heir to his lands, or real estate. Moreover, if a person attempt to kill another and fail, and then through rage at his disappointment sudddenly kill himself, he shall be punished and shall have no heir (to his lands as well as goods), because he is to be considered as guilty of the felonious attempt of killing another; since he who spares not himself will never spare another, when in his power. But the madman, or the idiot, or the infant, or the person under such acute pain as to produce a temporary distraction, who kills himself, shall forfeit neither lands nor chattels, because he is deprived of reason."[1]

But though the forfeiture of freehold property was soon abandoned, it was replaced by a money ransom; and, besides, the crown retained during some centuries later what was called "the year, day, and waste" of the freehold lands belonging to the *felo de se*. We

[1] Bracton, *De Legibus et Consuetudinibus Angliæ*, l. iii, Tract. ii, c. 31, in Moore, *loc. cit.*

find, for example, that the widow of Aubrey de Wytelsbury gave three hundred pounds to King Edward I (1283 to 1295, A. D.), that she might have all the goods and chattels of her husband, "a felon by drowning himself," saving the king "the year, day, and waste" of Aubrey's lands and tenements.[1]

English common law has preserved so much of the spirit of ecclesiastical canons as to classify suicides among persons dying in mortal sin. Under common-law provision the remains of suicides were interred in the public highway without any rites of Christian burial, and a stake was driven through them. But since the 4 of George IV, c. 52, they are interred in the churchyard, or other burial-place, of the parish, without religious rites, between 9 and 12 at night, and within twenty-four hours of the finding of the inquest.

It is doubtful whether the indignities so commonly heaped upon the bodies of suicides under French customary law were ever practised to any extent in England. The English custom of interment at a cross-road, with a stake driven through the body, though seemingly cruel and barbarous, has been explained so as to give it a foundation in other than the revengeful feelings of human nature. A writer in *Notes and Queries* (first series, vol. v, p. 356) thinks a cross-road was selected, because that was "a place where a cross or crucifix stood, and only second in sanctity to the churchyard," and that "the stake driven through the body was perhaps first intended, not as an insult, but to keep the ghost of the suicide from walking on the earth again." Probably the last person subjected to burial at a cross-road in England was the parricide and suicide Griffiths, who was interred, June, 1823, at the in-

[1] Madox, *Exch.* 347, cited in *Penny Cyclopædia*, Art. *Suicide.*

tersection of Grosvenor Place and the King's Road. So, likewise, the custom of extracting the corpse of the suicide from the house in which it was found, had its English origin, it would appear, in a popular superstitious notion. "At the funeral of a suicide at Scone, N. B., some forty women endeavored, by persuasion and threats, to cause the body to be lifted over the graveyard wall instead of being carried through the gate. The reason of this is supposed to be, that in the event of the body being allowed to pass through the gate, the first bride 'kirked' thereafter will commit suicide within a very short period after her marriage; and that the first child carried to church to be christened will commit suicide before it reaches the age of eight years." [1]

In Scotland, however, the severe Continental spirit cropped up occasionally. Speaking of the witch prosecutions in that country, Arnot says: "If an unfortunate woman, trembling at a citation for witchcraft, ended her sufferings by her own hand, she was dragged from her house at a horse's tail, and buried under the gallows." [2] Evidence of the existence of a like spirit is given in an extract from the Diary of Robert Birrell, Burgess of Edinburgh, and runs as follows, in the quaint language of its day: "1598, Febr. 20. The 20 day of Februar, Thomas Dobie drounit himself in the Quarrel holes beside the Abbey" (Holyrood), "and upon the morne he was harlit throw the toune backward, and thereafter hangit on the gallows." [3]

But with the growth of more humane feelings in both countries, the civil punishment of suicide dwindled to what it is at the present day.

[1] *Notes and Queries*, 3d series, vol. v, p. 170.

[2] *Criminal Trials*, p. 368.

[3] Ibid., 1st series, vol. v, p. 272.

BOOK II

SPECIAL AND PERSONAL ORDER OF CAUSES

The causes of contemporary suicide may be conveniently arranged under two heads:

I. Special causes.
II. Personal causes.

The special differ from the general causes of suicide, previously examined, in having a more restricted range of action. They are to the general causes what local are to epidemic factors of disease,—that is, their sphere of activity is, for the major part, limited to a few individuals in each community. Though, just as a local miasmatic influence may affect a large number of persons exposed to it, so one or other of the special causes of suicide may act on many minds to the production of a suicide epidemic.

The following list includes the more important of the special causes of suicide:

1 Age.
2 Sex.
3 Hereditary influence.
4 Insanity.
5 Imitation.
6 Education.
7 Literature.
8 Domestic troubles.
9 Love troubles.
10 Intoxicants.
11 Financial losses and embarrassments.
12 Occupation.
13 Habitation.
14 Race and nationality.
15 Atmospheric and climatic influences.

PART FIRST.

SPECIAL CAUSES OF SUICIDE.

CHAPTER I.

Age and Sex.

WHEN Quételet produced his work, *Sur l' Homme*, first published at Brussels in 1836, statistics on the relation of age to suicide were scarce. Since then they have multiplied, and now afford material on the subject of great interest and value. By the term age is here understood the critical periods of life. It includes, besides the secondary fact of years, a wide range of social and personal relations.

The chart on page 140 exhibits the relation of age to suicide, in both sexes, regardless of population.

According to this chart, the maximum of suicides occurs between the ages of 25 and 55. Previous to the 25th year, there is a sudden increase from two suicides between the ages of 5 and 10 to one hundred and thirty-four between 10 and 25. After the 55th year, the number diminishes, though more gradually than it increased, the gradation being interrupted by a slight rise at the 65th year, which, however, is no material interference with the downward tendency.

But, the true conclusion regarding this question can only be reached by comparing suicide at the various ages with corresponding totals of living persons. When this

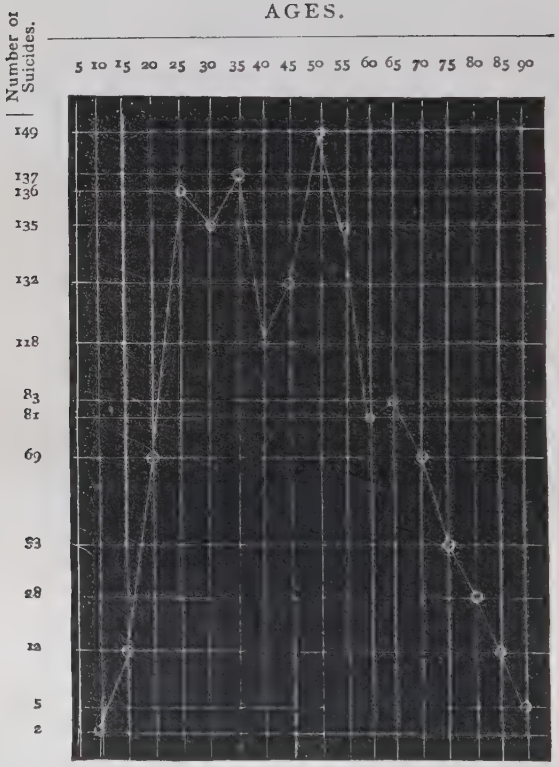

CHART I.—Suicide and Age. Both Sexes. Compiled from the U. S. Census of 1870.

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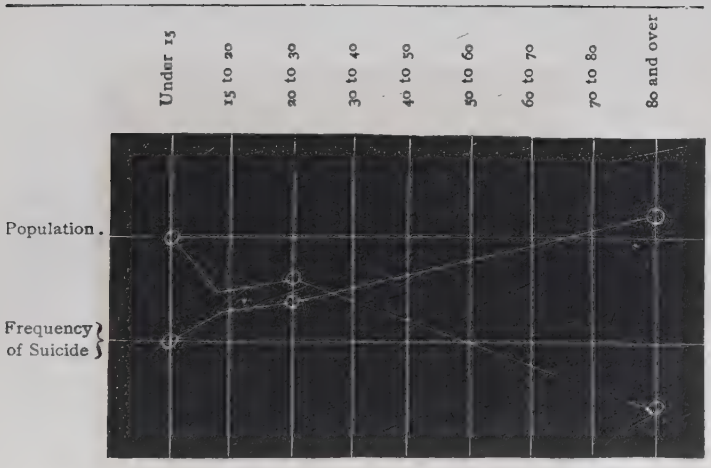
is done, a result appears which is roughly outlined in the diagram on page 141.

The information conveyed by this diagram is made



more exact and serviceable by the following table, taken from the *Medico-Chirurgical Review*, vol. xxvii, p. 211, which shows the proportion of suicides to the entire number of persons at the different periods of life.

YEARS.	SUICIDES.	POPULATION.
10 to 15	12	50,000
16 " 20	38	71,000
21 " 25	63	73,000
26 " 30	67	70,000
31 " 40	107	117,000
41 " 50	115	91,000
51 " 60	85	74,000
61 " 70	41	51,000
71 " 80	14	20,000
81 " 90	2	4,000

The facts embodied in this table are confirmed by most subsequent investigations, and warrant the following conclusions:

1. Suicides increase in number until extreme old age.[1]

2. The increase is in direct ratio to population until the age of thirty, after which it continues in inverse ratio to population until the allotted time of life.

3. The number of suicides is very small, both absolutely and relatively to population, previous to the age of fifteen.

For convenience of study we may distinguish three suicide periods in life, corresponding with (1) physical and mental growth, (2) physical and mental maturity, (3) physical and mental decline. From the point of view of this classification it may be asserted as generally true, that suicides increase in frequency from the attainment of physiological maturity until the full limit of life.

Let us now enter more fully into the manifold relations of age to suicide, in the three periods indicated above. Until the age of 15, the salient physiological facts to be noted are, on the one hand, predominance of sensori-motor and excito-motor functions, with advanced growth of their respective nerve centres, and, on the other, rudimentary intellectual powers, implying an undeveloped state of the brain proper. Looking at the individual on his moral side, we find corresponding facts here also. There is a degree of sensitiveness which would be morbid in adults, but is often nothing but natural in childhood; and there is a kind of wilfulness which, lacking well-conceived purpose, is prone to ca-

[1] The returns for England show this, excepting a slight decrease after the 75th year. See Appendix, E.

price and obstinacy. Facts are regarded from the standpoint of feeling with little or no suspicion of their true character; and resulting actions are not only hasty and ill-considered, but out of proportion to the magnitude of their causes.

The consciousness of a child reflects, like a mirror, the image of his individuality, together with his immediate environment in space. The task set by nature to the child, as the groundwork of his moral training, is that of separating and harmonizing these blended, but often at the same time, conflicting impressions, and of knowing his true relation to the world he lives in. This is the object and method of nature's teaching; and nature, though tender and benign as a mother, is arbitrary and uncompromising as a taskmaster. It is in the acquisition of this task that young people—the necessary difficulties of whose situation are too often increased by the conduct of their superiors—lose heart and commit suicide.

The child, whose fresh organs and active functions find natural expression in boundless hope and joyous demonstration, is yet some day or other confronted with pain. Not mere physical pain, which never impels children, as it so often does adults, to suicide; but moral pain, of that kind especially which results from a shock inconsistent with sentimental life. The shock may come in one or other of a number of forms,—most often in the form of injustice, or of a necessary though too tardy discipline.

If we watch the effect of injustice on a happy child,—and all healthy children are naturally disposed to be happy,—it will be seen to check every demonstration of what is spontaneous and active in his temperament. The pent up nerve currents must of course discharge themselves after some

fashion, and their channel to the outer world being closed, they overflow within, filling the heretofore unconscious child with self-consciousness, gloom, and despondency. Fortunately, the large majority of children get over depressing influences soon; were it otherwise they would kill themselves in greater numbers than they do. In spite of this natural buoyancy, however, the effect of repeated acts of injustice is to foster habits of feeling controlled by emotional self-love,—phases of that morbid subjectivism which lies at the root of all suicide. A like result is prone to follow unwise indulgence of the caprices of children, a parental failing not less common, to say the least, than its opposite, and one, too, which, by encouraging their purely selfish feelings, impels them to seek their personal gratification at no matter what cost to others. When a spoiled child encounters some unexpected check to the gratification of his whims, he grows morbidly irritable and passionate. There are examples on record of children killing themselves in a wicked mood to spite their enemies and inflict on them the revenge of an irreparable sorrow.

Nor must it be thought that the suicides of children under these circumstances are confined to civilized life. They are said to trouble the Sea Dayaks very much, who give way entirely to the caprices of their young ones.[1]

Such are the predisposing causes of child-suicides. Their most common exciting causes, according to good authority, are punishment, reproof, and ill-usage;[2] but, in reality, these causes are as numerous and varied as the limited social relations of children permit. In my own col-

[1] St. John, *Life in the Far East*, vol. i, p. 49.

[2] Durand-Fardel, *Étude sur le Suicide chez les Enfants. Ann. Méd. Psychologiques*, 3me serie, 1855, vol. i, p. 61.

lection of child-suicides, *five* were caused by fear of punishment, either legal or parental; *one* by cruel treatment; *one* by remorse consequent upon a theft; *one* by aversion to school; and *one* by loss of an inheritance through a step-father's dishonesty. One boy, mentioned by excellent authority,[1] hung himself because his mother refused to buy a squirrel for which he had taken a sudden fancy; and another died in the same way because he was sent to bed supperless for having broken his mother's watch. This latter felt hurt that while he always suffered puishment for his misdeeds, those of his sister were generally overlooked.

The cool deliberation so characteristic of the suicides of children is mainly due to their not realizing what is involved in the surrender of life. They have no horror of death, a fact which accounts also for the very trivial motives governing some of their suicides, one boy killing himself because his bird dies, another because he is twelfth in his class. It should be remembered, however, that the magnitude of a sorrow depends in great part upon the temperament of the persons whose feelings are injured, plus their experience of life, and cannot be fairly estimated by any other standard.

There are not a few examples of adults committing suicide to be in heaven; but, with the exception of Harriet Martineau, I cannot recall any such among children. When this lady was in her seventh year, she became so enamored of paradise, which she pictured to herself "gay with yellow and lilac crocuses," that to be there she made preparations to cut her throat with a carving-knife. There is no reason to think that Miss

[1] Bucknill and Tuke, *Manual of Psychological Medicine*, 3d ed., London, 1874.

Martineau ever attempted such a deed in her after years, though it is not unusual to find in the histories of many actual suicides some reference or other to suicidal tendencies in their youthful days. Almost as rarely do we hear of children being carried away by that blind impulse to suicide which is occasionally exhibited by the lower animals, and of which the youth of Vittorio Alfieri affords an example in the following narrative. "When about seven or eight years of age," he says, "finding myself in one of those melancholy humors, perhaps occasioned by the weak state of my health, after having seen my preceptor and attendant go out, I darted from my little cabinet, which was level with the ground, and proceeded to a second court, covered with a profusion of plants which I immediately began to tear up by handfuls and devour with the greatest avidity, notwithstanding their pungent and bitter taste. I had heard hemlock mentioned as being an herb fatal to the life of man; and though I wished not to die, nor indeed scarcely knew what death was, nevertheless, led away by a sort of natural instinct, mingled with some secret and undefined grief, I eagerly devoured the plants which fell in my way, under the supposition that I had discovered hemlock."[1] Love troubles drove him later in life to make another attempt on his life.

The period of adolescence, lasting from the 15th to the 25th year, adds the stimulus, and possibly abuse, of sexual instinct to the conditions above mentioned. This will receive further attention in another place. Suffice it for the present to observe, that although this instinct has a share in the predisposing causes of suicide, it is not the

[1] *Life*, Boston, 1877, p. 64.

chief, much less sole cause of its increasing frequency at this stage of development. Most likely it is the physical basis of it, the source of the restless, wayward, and unsatisfied longings so frequent with budding men and women; but other causes are simultaneously at work, and should be looked for in that general unfolding of mind and body through which this stage of youth is passing. The inner life is fast awakening to new feelings, interests, and emotions. Sentiment is ripening apace. Lofty ideals and purposes are born but to die at the first rude contact with reality. The literature of feeling as contained in novel and poem is greedily devoured. When at length this world of fancy clashes with the world of fact, as perforce it must sooner or later, the moment is big with danger, and fortunate is he who lives through it without the additional risk of having to face an impulse to suicide.

The period of physical and mental maturity lasts from the 25th to the 55th year, and is devisible likewise into two sub-periods, one ending at 35, where the other begins. During the first of these sub-periods there is an awakening of the intellectual powers and a questioning of things, including moral and religious truths. It is the time of greatest risk from temptations also, more especially those which proceed out of evil companionship and the allurements of city life. And, besides, it witnesses the first earnest struggle to get on in the world. Already the bright hopefulness of youth has given place to the faculty for looking before and after, which not seldom indulges itself in needless broodings over the past and worrying anxiety about the future.

"All the inconveniences in the world," says Mon-

taigne, "are not considerable enough that a man should die to evade them; and, besides, there being so many sudden changes in human things, it is hard rightly to judge when we are at the end of our hope."

Although the wisdom of such philosophy as this is never questioned by reasonable minds, it is not even thought of by men whose brains are racked with worry and whose hearts are filled with despair. At this time of life, moreover, hereditary disease is prone to appear; and among those who are in danger of falling victims to it, some anticipate what they imagine will be their doom, by a voluntary death.

The sub-period commencing with the 35th and ending with the 55th year, is fruitful of suicides. It is the time of domestic troubles and anxieties, of business cares and responsibilities, of speculation, disaster, and hard drinking. It is the time of bad health also, when the abused, overtaxed frame begins to totter; when functional or structural derangements of one kind or another cast a gloom over sentiment, and promote the tendency to insanity which is strongest between these years.

The time of old age has been likened to a second childhood, though it could be shown that there is little justice in the comparison. While the most noticeable feature of child-life is action, that of old age is inaction. The child lives in the present, the aged in the past. The child is naturally optimistic, believing in the goodness of all things, except punishment. The aged are as naturally pessimistic, convinced that every thing is wrong, that the times in which they linger and the people with whom they meet are degenerate in comparison with the brighter days and more heroic characters of long ago.

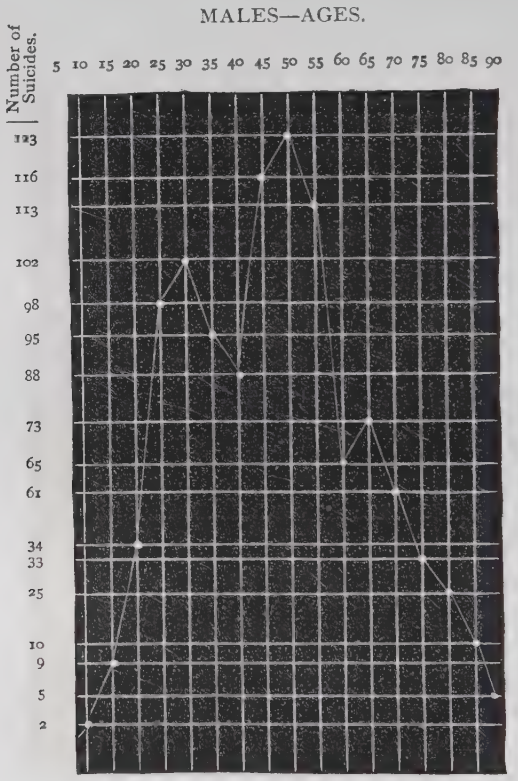
If there be one peculiarity of the aged more noticeable than another, it is their loss of hope and of that lively interest in current events which hope inspires. The tree dies at the top, as the saying is: the intellect of the aged decays first; and their emotions, released from the guiding influence of reason, occupy the entire field of personal consciousness. Attentive observers of the aged can not avoid being impressed with their all-absorbing self-consciousness and self-love. There is here, if anywhere, it must be confessed, a seeming approach between the extremes of life; but while querulous age sits nursing its grievances, youth, hopeful and elastic, has forgotten them all in some new joy or fresh enterprise.

The sensitiveness of the aged in matters of personal concern is illustrated by the story of a suicide which occurred in Paris not very long ago. A lady who had attained her seventy-fifth year, read in the *Petit Journal* that the cemeteries of Paris would soon be closed for good, and thereafter the dead would be buried at *Méry-sur-Oise*. She showed great uneasiness at this announcement, and committed suicide. She left a note stating that she had long set her heart on being buried in *Montparnasse*, and had killed herself that she might not be too late for interment there.

The influence of sex at the three periods of life is shown on the following charts.

Alike on the male and female charts, the lines rise abruptly until they reach the 25th year. There they part company. A slight descent of the female line is immediately followed by its sharp ascent to the thirty-fifth year, at which age a large number of suicides occur among women. It will be noted that the period from the twentieth to the fortieth year—which includes the

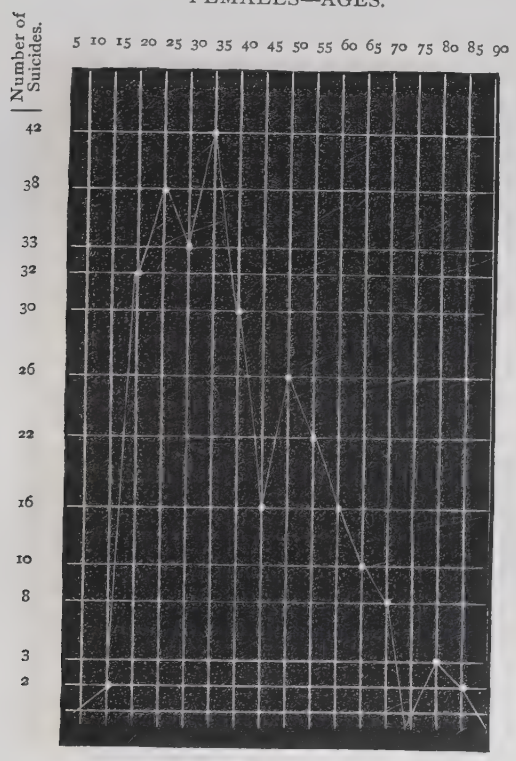
highest points on the female chart—corresponds to the greatest pressure from domestic troubles and responsi-



Compiled from the U. S. Census of 1870.

bilities, and to the greatest activity of the maternal functions. The last rise of the line on the female chart is at

the fiftieth year, which is also, generally speaking, the acme of the change of life process.



Compiled from the U. S. Census of 1870.

As will be seen on comparing these charts together, there are two culminating points on each, with the fol-

lowing differences: The lower culminating point on the male chart is the higher on the female, and, *vice versa*, the lower on the female is the higher on the male. The majority of female suicides are crowded into the earlier years of life. Male suicides are more equally distributed, and attain their maximum later.

There is a pretty constant relation between the sexes in respect to their comparative liabilities to suicide. The general proportion among most civilized countries is three men to one woman. There are some exceptions to this general rule. In England and Wales the average is two men to one woman. In Denmark it is four to one. In large cities there is a tendency to an equality between the sexes, and the more cosmopolitan the city the greater is this tendency. In the absence of statistical information, it is impossible to declare any thing definite with respect to the relative frequency of suicides among the sexes in barbarous countries; but the remarks of travellers on this subject leave the impression that, under the hard conditions of female existence in such communities, self-inflicted death is as frequent, to say the least, among women as among men.

The general constancy observed in the proportion of men to women suicides is all the more remarkable, if it be remembered that although more males are born than females, yet the latter outnumber the former by six per cent. of the living population. The explanation of the comparative immunity of woman from suicide is to be found in her greater freedom from the moral influences that tend thereto. In all troubles, moreover, that do not affect the sentiment of attachment to persons, woman is generally more patient and resigned than man; and having profounder religious feelings, she

possesses a never-failing source of comfort in her afflictions.

As just now remarked, it is in those cases especially which involve the sentiment of personal attachment, that the suicides of females approach those of males nearer than the general relation of one to three. Of this truth the following table furnishes a good illustration.

CAUSE OF SUICIDE.	MEN.	WOMEN.	TOTAL.
Grief caused by loss of parents, etc.	373	193	566
Grief caused by ingratitude of children	137	74	211
Grief caused by departure of children	20	20	40
Grief caused by separation from family	35	16	51
Forbidden love	938	627	1,565
Jealousy between married couples and between lovers . . .	229	118	347
Grief at quitting a master or a house .	53	24	77

On the other hand, the difference between the sexes is great where the cause of suicide is the indulgence of some propensity or passion, as shown in this next table.

CAUSE.	MEN.	WOMEN.	TOTAL.
Gambling	157	1	158
Laziness	76	4	80
Debauchery	1,569	233	1,802
Drunkenness	2,761	441	3,202 [1]

[1] This and the preceding table are compiled from Lisle, *Du Suicide*, pp. 105, 106. For further confirmation of the statements made above, see Appendix, F.

The mode of suicide is also governed by sex. Women occasionally end their lives with the pistol, but their usual recourse is to drowning or poison, because they instinctively shrink from mutilation of their bodies. Their preference for drowning over all other modes is due to a sentiment arising in them on contrasting their impressions of water—its mystery, repose, and grateful coolness, especially—with the turmoil and fever of their passions. While men occasionally resort to similar modes of suicide, they are not so fastidious in their choice. They are apt to seize the first means that offers, which is generally some kind of firearm.

CHAPTER II.

Hereditary Influence—Insanity—Imitation.

A POWER so universal in nature as hereditary influence, must needs have some effect upon the tendency to suicide. It is indisputable that tendencies to disease are hardly less hereditary than tendencies to health. But there is at least this difference between the transmission of good health as compared with the transmission of disease, that while the former passes whole and intact from parent to offspring, the latter, on the contrary, is often so changed *in transitu* that when it does reappear it is apt to present itself shorn of its original character. If, for instance, the family history of that melancholy which marks the tendency to suicide be traced back along its line of descent, a point will, in all likelihood, be reached where it has displayed itself as some bodily disease with little or no association with mental gloom.

Again, cross-fertilization is an important and ever-busy modifier of morbid tendency. A lady now under medical treatment for irritation of the nervous centres and melancholy, with strong occasional impulses to suicide, has a highly emotional mother and a placid, easy-going father. Her case presents a not uncommon result of sexual genesis, viz., a modification of inherited peculiarities caused by antag-

onistic parental influences. She inherits her mother's nerves and her father's mind. And, though it may sound like a paradox to say so, yet it is not at all improbable that to the combination of such opposite qualities in her own nature is due whatever in her tendency to suicide can be ascribed to temperament alone. She would seem indeed to be a resultant of the law of the composition of causes, according to which two forces acting equally from opposite quarters produce an intermediate effect; for the mean between placidity and nervous irritability is as near an approach as possible to the physical and mental state of the melancholic.

In the example just given, the impulse to suicide was indirectly transmitted; and in the class to which it belongs the inheritance consists in a semi-morbid state of the general nervous system called the insane neurosis. Owing either to some accidental circumstance, or to a further development of the law of heredity, a special feature of that neurosis may predominate in the form of melancholy, with, in all probability, a marked tendency to suicide. But besides this indirect way of transmission, the suicidal tendency may pass unaltered from parent to child. At least, such a statement is made on good authority, and is attested by what seem to be well-verified examples. Burrows mentions the transmission of a suicidal tendency from one to another of three generations of a family. Falrét records a case where a man transmitted his suicidal melancholy to his five sons, all of whom perished sooner or later by their own hands. M. De Boismont gives the history of a family impulse to self-destruction which was experienced by a father, his own brother, and his two sons. Dr. Carpenter quotes an analogous case from the report of the Morningside Lu-

natic Asylum for 1850,[1] and additional cases are given by Drs. Connolly and Maudsley.[2] What would seem to be an example of this form of heredity was reported in the Paris *Evénement* a few years ago. The subject of the narrative was one Jules Delmas, whose father, mother, and sister had put an end to their lives, each in turn. To all outward appearances M. Delmas was a prosperous and happy man. His home life was peaceful; he was not financially embarrassed; there were no apparent reasons why he should have destroyed himself. One evening as he and his wife were returning home from the *Boulevard Batignolles*, where they had been shopping together, he suddenly exclaimed to her: "O! look here, I have somewhere to go to. It 's a long way off, and there is no use in your coming with me, so you had better keep on home." So saying he left her without further ceremony. She heard nothing more of him until the next morning, when she received the following note in his own handwriting: "Forgive me, my poor Margaret; I am going to cause you one more vexation, but it will be the last. I go to rejoin my father and mother." That was all.

One more example: A few years ago an insane woman, native of the United States, hung herself with the identical rope employed by her brother for the same purpose fifteen years previous, and which she had carefully preserved from the day of his death. This probably is also a case of inherited tendency to suicide, and of heredity of means as well as tendency. Preferences for par-

[1] *Principles of Mental Physiology*, N. Y., p. 665.

[2] *Responsibility in Mental Diseases*, N. Y., 1874.

(Besides the works already referred to on this subject, the student may consult Ribot, *Hérédité*, N. Y., 1875; Gall, *Functions of the Brain;* Rush, *Medical Inquiries and Observations on Diseases of the Mind;* Esquirol, *Maladies Mentales;* Falrét, *Traité de l' Hypochondrie et du Suicide;* De Boismont, *Du Suicide;* and Burrows, *Commentaries.*)

ticular modes of self-destruction seem to run in some families.

There is a general correspondence between the rate of insanity in a country and the rate of its suicides. Those States of the American Union, for example, which exhibit the highest rates of insanity, exhibit also the highest rates of suicide. This is shown in the following table.

STATE.	RATIO TO 100,000 POPULATION, U. S. CENSUS OF 1870.	
	SUICIDES.	INSANE.
California	14.493	196.9
Maine	4.625	126.4
Massachusetts	7.200	182.5
New Hampshire	7.854	172.1
Vermont	7.000	218.1

On the other hand, those States which have a low rate of insanity, have a low rate of suicide.

STATE.	RATIO TO 100,000 POPULATION, U. S. CENSUS OF 1870.	
	SUICIDES.	INSANE.
Delaware	2.399	52.0
Georgia	1.182	53.5
Indiana	3.154	89.4
Louisiana	2.063	62.0
Tennessee	1.517	73.5

But the exceptions to the general correspondence above exhibited are so numerous that these tables can hardly be used as proof of any necessary relation between insanity and suicide. On referring to the general table (Appendix, G) it will be perceived how numerous and weighty these exceptions are. To instance two of them here: Connecticut, with an insanity rate of 143.5, has a suicide rate of 3.907. The difference is still greater in Rhode Island, where, with a suicide rate of 2.760, there is an insanity rate of 143.0. Other examples of discrepancies in this relation might be given, but these will suffice to show that there is no constancy between the number of suicides in a country and the number of its insane.

But though we cannot establish any constant relation between insanity as cause and suicide as effect; though it cannot be asserted that the countries which have most insane have the largest number of suicides, it can nevertheless be laid down as a general rule that *the causes which have a tendency to increase insanity, have also a tendency to increase the rate of suicide.* When exceptions to this rule occur, they are generally traceable to some special cause or causes strong enough to nullify its operation.

Viewing *suicide in relation to insanity*, without reference to population, the following facts appear. About 30 per cent. of the insane are melancholic.[1] Melancholics form a class of deranged people among whom the suicide impulse is invariably looked for, and who actually manifest it in some 35 per cent. of their number.[2] The degree

[1] Pennsylvania Hospital for the Insane, *Reports*, 1860 to 1870, inclusive.

[2] Gray, John P., M.D. *Suicide, American Journal of Insanity*, July, 1878.

of this tendency is governed, to a certain extent, by sex. Thus, of the total of male melancholics, 39 per cent., and of the total of female melancholics, 29 per cent., take their own lives. This relation is reversed in countries where women are more heavily burdened with toil and anxiety than men. In Italy, the proportion of insane suicides to one thousand deaths from all causes, in 1877, was 286.87, of which number 183.04 were females, and only 103.83 were males.

Viewing *insanity in relation to suicide*, it has been ascertained that one third of the total of self-inflicted deaths are due to diseases of the mind.[1] This is the general average for Europe.[2] The French vital statistics for 1869, give 5,114 suicides, among which 1,516 were caused by insanity; and 5,617 for the year 1876, of which 1,433 are ascribed to the same cause. Among the 52,126 suicides that happened in France, from 1836 to 1852, there were 13,241 due to insanity in one form or another, and of these 8,486 were males, and 4,755 females. Among 508 melancholics admitted to the New York State Lunatic Asylum at Utica, during the five years from 1873 to 1877, 180, or more than a third, had attempted suicide at their own homes.

The influence of example, and the propensity to imitate, are well-known facts. In the act of seizing food the chick copies the movements of its mother. Similarly, young people mimic their elders, and one hysterical patient in a hospital ward causes other patients to become hysterical.

Bad example is more easily, and hence more commonly, followed than good,—the chief requisite being to give

[1] Von Ottengen, *Moral Statistics and Christian Manners.*

[2] There are no facilities for discovering the average in America.

impulse its fling. The imitation of good example, on the contrary, is difficult, because it necessitates self-restraint and the subordination of impulse to reason.

At the very root of imitation there is a psychological principle, without which, most probably, it would have little of its actual force. This principle is sympathy, or imagination, which is but another name for the same thing. Sympathy is that state of mind in which those who have it represent vividly to themselves the ideas and feelings of others,—so vividly, indeed, that they are often moved to outward demonstrations by them. The state of mind induced by cultivation of this faculty is one of dominant emotion, and this, bearing, as it inevitably must, a general resemblance to its analogue in the mind sympathized with, is prone to show itself, not in outward general demonstration merely, but even in corresponding action. The sight of a weeping person excites an emotion in a sympathetic mind, which results in a flow of tears. Similarly, the sight of a laughing person excites laughter. Examples in point are the dancing mania of the Middle Ages, the tarantula mania of Apulia, the mania of the Cornwall Jumpers and *Convulsionnaires* of the Paris miracles, and the mewing and biting manias of mediæval nunneries.

An identical principle lies at the root of imitative suicide. In all acts of self-destruction thus induced, there is a something—none the less real because non-apparent—besides the mere exterior sign of imitation,—a something which prefaces and explains what else might seem a meaningless act. When one wretch after another hung himself from a beam that stretched across one of the London by-ways, when soldier after soldier in the army of Napoleon I put a voluntary end to his life, not

to mention a host of like occurrences, it was not the mere fact of one man's suicide causing others to kill themselves; it was that a like experience of trouble, creating a common bond of sympathy, resulted in similar acts, in accordance with the laws of mental action. Without this intermediate link of feeling, the suicide of one person would not cause the suicide of another.

Choice of the mode of suicide in this class of cases is made by the one who first destroys himself, and is determined by some accidental circumstance, or object, like the beam already mentioned.

The more noted suicide epidemics are the Egyptian epidemic, caused by the orations of Hegesias, and the Milesian; the epidemics of Mansfield, in 1679, Rouen, in 1806, St. Pierremont-Jean, in 1813, Etampes, Lyons, and Versailles. This last epidemic—in 1793—was the most terrible of all, as many as one thousand three hundred people having killed themselves while it lasted.

CHAPTER III.

Education—Literature.

SOME investigators have announced that suicide increases in direct proportion to spread of knowledge. After an elaborate study on this point, M. Brouc declared it to be a "social law" that suicide is most common where education is most diffused, and that suicide and scholars increase in the same ratio.[1] And, following him, M. Lisle makes a like statement. ("Nous pouvons donc poser comme une loi générale que depuis tres long temps la fréquence des suicides est en raison directe de l' etat de l' instruction." Lisle, *Du Suicide*, p. 81.)

Although M. Brouc's declaration, that "suicide and scholars increase in the same ratio," savors of exaggeration, still the possibility of such a relation is startling enough to require serious looking into. Whoever devotes himself to the study of this point will find that the data for M. Brouc's sweeping conclusion are not accessible in that ultimate form and that state of isolation which scientific precision requires. Until they are thus accessible, the investigator will not be able to allot to education its proper share, whatever that may be, in the causation of suicide. He will find again, that while M.

[1] *Annales d' hygiene publique et de médecine légale*, Paris, 1836, t. xvi, p. 223, *et seq.*

Brouc's bare statement may be true enough, the inference which he and the opponents generally of universal education draw from it is decidedly at fault. It does not seem logical to conclude from the mere co-existence of two such facts as spread of knowledge and increase of suicide, that the latter is owing to the former. The spread of knowledge is interwoven with a multitude of influences, all of which contribute to the effect ascribed by M. Brouc to education alone. In proportion to the general increase in intelligence, the life of every community grows more varied and many-sided, while at the same time it is exposed to new vicissitudes of an increasingly graver character. Fresh wants are created, varied industries arise, population accumulates in the centres of trade, and the farm is abandoned for the town. There follow, of necessity, greater competition, with more pinching for the workman; greater risks and losses, with more wear of body and mind for the capitalist; and, besides these, all the many unhealthy physical and moral influences that multiply in crowded centres of trade and commerce. If the simple, uneventful, and, so to speak, vegetative life of the rustic be compared with the hazardous career of the inhabitant of a large city—and large cities, being the centres of all progress, are the best places to test M. Brouc's declaration—it may be seen at a glance how great are the number and variety of factors which education denotes, and how fallacious it is to ascribe to only one of them the total of an effect for which all are conjointly responsible.

This criticism loses none of its force, even though we admit the facts on which MM. Brouc and Lisle base their conclusion respecting the influence of education on suicide. These facts, briefly stated, are as follow: The

annual returns of the French Minister of War, from 1836 to 1848 inclusive, show a constant increase in the number of instructed persons throughout France. Their average, which was barely 38 *per cent.* of population from 1827 to 1830, rose to 61 *per cent.* in 1848. Corresponding with this spread of instruction, there was a marked rise in the percentage of suicides—a rise to be accounted for in part by more accurate registration and increase of population, but which these factors do not wholly explain. They are not sufficient to account for an increase in the number of suicides, from *one* in 14,207 inhabitants in 1836 to *one* in 9,340 in 1852. But, what seems stronger testimony in favor of M. Brouc's law is this, that it is precisely in the most enlightened divisions of France that suicides are most numerous. The Department of the North is first in intelligence, and therein occur 50 *per cent.* of the total of suicides throughout France. That of the East is next, and has 16 *per cent.* of suicides; while the departments of the Centre, South, and West, where secular education is least diffused, have between them only 34 *per cent.*

To all this, however, there are the following replies, in addition to those just given :

First, if there be the intimate relation between education and suicide which is asserted, how comes it that four sixths of the total of suicides occur among the working class, while at most only two sixths are committed by the upper classes, including literary and professional men. Secondly, while it is true that the divisions of France in which education is most diffused are at the same time those afflicted with móst suicides, it should be remembered that they are also the centres of her commercial and manufacturing industries, and that their population is denser, harder worked, and, in proportion to

their needs, poorer than the population of her agricultural districts. But a more reliable conclusion may be reached, as regards France, by comparing her smaller divisions with each other. When this is done, as in the following table from M. Bloc's book,[1] it will be seen that there is not that constant relation between knowledge and suicide, which is required to prove cause and effect.

SUICIDES NUMEROUS.			SUICIDES FEW.		
DEPARTMENTS.	SUICIDES.	ILLITERATES IN 100 POP.	DEPARTMENTS.	SUICIDES.	ILLITERATES IN 100 POP.
Seine.	806	7.0	Corse.	6	31.4
Nord.	155	29.5	Lozère. . . .	7	32.4
Seine et Oise. . .	155	7.9	Hautes-Pyren. . .	9	11.8
Seine-Infer. . .	151	29.1	Cantal.	9	25.2
Aisne.	129	19.1	Haut-Loire. . .	9	43.5
Oise.	127	14.4	Ariége.	10	66.6
Marne.	125	7.9	Pyren-Orient. . .	10	41.6
Seine et Marne. .	114	10.9	Haute-Savoi. . .	11	15.8

The proof furnished by this table is made conclusive by statistics derived from other countries and given on the next page.

Thirdly, M. Brouc's inference does not accord with what is known respecting the relation of ignorance to crime. Statistics show that 80 per cent. of crimes in the United States are committed by the ignorant, and that 95 per cent of our juvenile criminals come from illiterate

[1] *L' Europe Politique et Sociale*, Paris, 1869, p. 206.

DEATHS FROM SUICIDE IN 1876, IN EACH OF THE UNDERMENTIONED COUNTRIES.[1]

COUNTRIES.	PROPORTION OF SUICIDES TO 1,000,000 LIVING.	DEGREE OF EDUCATION. PERCENTAGE OF ILLITERACY.
Switzerland,	196	Nearly free from illit.
England and Wales,	73	33
Scotland,	37	21
Ireland,	21	46
Norway,	70	Nearly free from illit.
Finland,	34	" " "
Sweden,	92	" " "
Prussia,	134	" " "
Bavaria,	103	7
Belgium,	82	30
Austria,	113	49
Italy,	37	73
United States,	40	20

and vicious homes.[2] It were extraordinary indeed if education, which prevents objective crimes,—crimes against the rights of others,—should increase the subjective crime of suicide. Nor, finally, is there that correspondence between the comparative literacy and comparative suicide of the sexes which should be found were M. Brouc's inference correct. In the United States the percentage of male illiterates, of ten years old and upward, to the male population of corresponding ages in 1870, was 20.4, and of female illiterates, estimated on the same basis, 18.26; but the relative suicides of the sexes are much wide of this ratio, being generally three among men to one among women.

[1] From the fortieth *Annual Report of the Registrar-General of England, Abstract* of 1877. The statistics of illiteracy, inserted by myself, are mostly from Kidder and Schem, *Cyclopædia of Education*, Art., *Illiteracy*.

[2] *Prisons and Reformatories at Home and Abroad*, London, 1872; Kidder and Schem, *Op. Cit.*, Art., *Crime and Education*.

Although, on a critical examination of M. Brouc's so-called "social law," in the light of facts, there is found ample reason to modify his conclusion, it is yet open to any one to maintain, on psychological grounds, that a higher intellectual development may mediately increase the tendency to suicide. The fundamental facts of knowledge being discrimination, agreement, and retentiveness, their cultivation, by imparting to the individual wider and more varied possibilities, increases his sensibility to painful and pleasurable feelings, and to their consequences, whether good or evil.

In this sense, and to this extent only, what Girardin says has a lurking truth: "Men who have not studied, women who have not read romances, do not, in their troubles, have recourse to suicide. * * * The most wretched and destitute man in the world, * * * if he had not added to his sufferings the torment of thoughts, would never think of taking his life in his own hand."[1] This is the opinion of a clever literary critic. But now, consider one moment the conviction of a great literary genius, who had himself the suicidal tendency. He speaks not of sensational literature, like Girardin, but of solid knowledge, and these are his words: "I am certain had I not stored my mind with useful knowledge before attaining my thirtieth year, I should either have become insane or committed suicide."[2]

But even were it possible to separate the factor education from all other social factors, and to allot it its due share of suicides, there would still remain the necessity of distinguishing between the various degrees and kinds of education, and of learning which, among these degrees

[1] *Lectures on Dramatic Literature*, first series, N. Y., 1847, p. 55.
[2] Alfieri, *Life*, p. 185.

and kinds, is the responsible agent in the case. The conclusion arrived at would probably be that increase of suicide is not so much due to spread of knowledge as to *some defects and evil tendencies in our current educational system.* One of these—a most important one too—may be mentioned here.

The attention of teachers is often directed to the fact that the part of education which has for object a knowledge of matter and its laws, occupies their minds to the exclusion of that no less important part which deals with the relation of the pupil to his moral environment, and which aims at giving him a character at once positive and practical. A one-sided, or intellectual training will no more suffice unto this end than a one-sided, or moral training. The essential is training based on a scientific knowledge of character, having for subject the relations of individuals to their moral as well as physical surroundings, and for object correct thought, unbiassed by emotion, and right conduct. The ultimate elements of character being action, emotion, and intellect, the difference between dispositions lies in their respective shares of each of these elements.[1] More will be said on this point when we come to study the mental causes of suicide. At present it is sufficient to observe that the training of the emotional element of character is of great consequence to health and happiness. Nature having endowed many, perhaps a majority, of our race with excess of this element, the happiness of countless souls is made to depend on their ability to adapt themselves to the circumstances and accidents of daily life. And though it is not in the power of formal tuition to bring this about; though every one must work out his own

[1] Bain, *Logic, Deductive and Inductive*, N. Y., 1874, p. 520.

salvation in great part by himself, this task would be more easily accomplished, and with less personal sin and suffering, were the science of character made the basis of education, and the formation of a strong character one of its main objects. Putting aside disease and insanity, why is it that under like provocation A commits suicide while B does not? Chiefly because A is either more emotional or has less self-reliance than B. Hence, every educational system that does not earnestly strive to habituate emotion to the control of a well-trained reason, is responsible for the rank growth of emotion and for such suicides as result therefrom.

The influence of literature on suicide is felt along many of its channels. One class of writings directly undermines good morals, and leads to courses of libertinism, or to lapses from virtue, which tend to suicide. To this class belong the indecent books, papers, and prints, which find their way into the hands of young and old. The extent to which this quality of literature is circulated in the United States is little dreamed of by the majority of people, and can only be inferred from official statements.

Through the exertions of the Young Men's Christian Association and the agency of Mr. Comstock in New York, there have been confiscated 134,000 pounds weight of lewd books intended for the American market, besides 94,000 pictures and photographs, 14,200 pounds of stereotype plates, and 130,000 advertising circulars, pamphlets, and songs of an indecent character. During the same year (1874) 106 wholesale dealers in these wretched wares were arrested, 20,000 orders seized, 6,000 traffickers in the same discovered on the account-books of manufacturers and publishers, and catalogues found containing the names of 20,000 persons, young and old,

who, it was presumed, would be likely purchasers. More terrible than all else, this traffic had invaded the public schools, where it was being industriously pushed among the school children of both sexes.

Another class of literature, though not so intentionally immoral, has an effect almost as bad. It includes all productions which, like *Werther* and *Love and Madness*, have a tendency to awaken whatever of the emotional and sensuous may slumber in susceptible minds. Under the influence of this kind of morbid stimulus, the desires of those who imbibe it grow to be the measure of their obligations, and they chafe against all restraint. The libertine—for such the pupil of this school of fiction is in danger of becoming—abandons himself to sensual gratifications; and when his energies are exhausted or his resources ended, *ennui* presses so hard upon him that he is prone to seek a voluntary death, like his prototype the degenerate Epicurean of olden time.

There is a third class of literature which cannot miss having an injurious tendency, since it advocates suicide openly, and backs this advocacy by arguments more or less ingenious. But so much has already been said on the substance and influence of this growth of literature that further reference to it is unnecessary. (See *ante*, p. 91, *et seq.*)

There remains for consideration a fourth class of literature,—great in all civilized countries, and used, in the main, for good ends,—the newspaper. Persons claiming to be impartial judges state that, by giving prominence to unnecessary and even sensational details of suicides, newspapers do occasionally promote the lurking suicide tendencies of some people. Looking over the columns of a widely-circulating evening journal not very long ago,

I chanced upon an article which seemed to give more than usual force to this charge, and I could not but consider its probable effect on some reader or other who, at the time, might be contending against an impulse to suicide. The writer of the article in question reviewed several recent suicides in the city of New York, and then communicated the following among other statements of a like kind:

"A physician said to me lately: 'A man cut his windpipe yesterday, and I was called to attend. It was a horrid-looking wound.' * * * To-day a respectable woman, more than fifty years old, who was in a state of melancholy, cut her throat so effectually that she died at once." The correspondent proceeds to pile horror on horror. He tells about an insane patient whom some one surprised in the act of sawing his throat with a dull razor, and who was "leaning at the same time over a trough, into which the blood was running. He was a very neat man," continues this writer, with an evident delight in such details, "and did not want to soil the floor in taking his exit; but the idea of cleanliness at such a time was very droll." After this he proceeds to heighten the effect by a touch of his own experience. He had never seen but one case of cut-throat in his life, he says, and that was on the person of a man of sixty years. "I ran to the house and saw the floor, which was uncarpeted, covered with blood, and in the midst of this lay an old man, in his shirt, at full length, with his throat cut from ear to ear."

Almost to a certainty, this effusion would not detain the mind of any sensible adult one moment after it had been read and cast aside; but it might, and in all probability would, have a powerful effect on melancholics and

lunatics, especially if they happened to be thinking of suicide at the time; and for this reason, that their peculiar mental state allows them to assimilate such ideas and feelings only as are in unison with their dominant train of thought. It is not always possible for even healthy people to banish depressing feelings, or the image of a painful spectacle, from their minds on the instant. They often need for this purpose vigorous efforts of will, or, what is more effective at times, a diverting feeling of equal strength,—a feeling germane to the idea in Dr. Chalmers' happy phrase, "the expulsive power of a new affection." Unfortunately, melancholics are often so paralyzed in their wills that they cannot avail themselves of any such aids. Their engrossing thoughts cling to them like parasites, and suck all vigor away from them. It is not any longer doubtful that suicide, like other crimes, is committed under the influence of suggestion; nor does it always need a strong suggestion to give fatal energy to a suicide impulse. Most students of mental pathology are familiar with the anecdote about Dr. Oppenheim, of Hamburg, and his assistant. The doctor was one day dissecting the body of a suicide who had cut his throat in so clumsy a manner that his death had been both slow and painful. Turning to his assistant he said, jokingly: "'If you have any fancy to cut your throat, don't do it in so bungling a way as this; a little more to the left here, and you will cut the carotid artery.'" "The individual to whom this advice was given," says Dr. Carpenter, "was a sober, steady man, with a family and a comfortable subsistence. He had never manifested the slightest tendency to suicide, and had no motive to commit it; yet, strange to say, the sight of the corpse, and the observation made

by Dr. Oppenheim, suggested to his mind the idea of self-destruction, and this took such firm hold of him that he carried it into execution. * * *"[1] Fortunately, however, he missed the carotid, and was saved.

In the London of three quarters of a century ago, fashionable society affected great admiration for Addison's Cato. At one of its stage representations, a Mr. Budgell was so impressed by the closing scene, which depicts the suicidal death of its hero, that, on his way from the theatre, he plunged into the Thames and was drowned. On his recovered body the following couplet was found:

> "What Cato did and Addison approved
> Must needs be right."

An impressive instance of the power of suggestion over a mind predisposed to suicide, happened in June, 1873. A widow bought Paris green to destroy rats. Possession of the poison whispered in her ear that now was her opportunity to commit suicide, and, under the influence of this temptation, she actually swallowed some of it and died.

Every day hundreds of people go about our large cities revolving thoughts of suicide in their minds, which gain strength beyond their control by every added suggestion, from whatever source it springs.

The complaint against newspapers here referred to, has been made time and time again. They, on their part, have replied either by denying the injurious tendency of their narratives, or by refusing to be held responsible for the remote and merely problematical consequences of their business, which is to furnish the news of the day.

[1] *Mental Physiology*, N. Y., 1874, p. 667.

Few will overlook the force of this latter defence. It would be unanswerable, if newspapers, rejecting all sensational embellishments, were to confine their narratives of suicides to necessary facts. If, besides, they would make it a point to mention age, occupation, civil condition, nationality, and previous state of health in these statements, and give at the same time a sober account of such facts as may be necessary to show the cause of the act, not only would their justification be established beyond cavil, but they would be furnishing material of great value to scientific investigators. But, while either wholly omitting or imperfectly noting these facts, to fill their space, and some minds too, with impressive details of suicides, is to do harm without a shadow of excuse. It is questionable indeed whether the publication of suicides can be justified on any ground except that of giving statistical information.

CHAPTER IV.

Domestic Troubles—Love Troubles.

THE proportion of suicides resulting from domestic troubles is relatively large. In an official return of 4,117 suicides committed in Paris, during 1871, there were 532 from this cause. In a similar return of 5,617 suicides, occurring in the same country, in 1876, those assigned to domestic troubles numbered 633. In the official return for Italy, in 1877, a total of 1,139 suicides gave 163.61 from these troubles. They number twenty per cent. of the total of suicides in my own collection. This is a higher percentage than would be warranted by a wider average. On the other hand Von Ottenger's estimate of ten per cent. is evidently too low.

Contrary perhaps to general belief, suicide from this cause is not much commoner among women than among men. The Italian returns for 1877 give the proportion as 74.32 men to 89.29 women. (See Appendix, F.) The proportion, however, varies among nations, as will be seen in the table on page 177, compiled from recent statistics published in the *Europe* of Brussels.

The high rate of suicide from domestic troubles in France and Italy is attributed by some to the fact that these countries have no divorce law.

PROPORTION OF SUICIDE TO SEX IN 1,000 SUICIDES FROM DOMESTIC TROUBLES.

NATION.	MALES.	FEMALES.
France	138	164
Italy	75	76
Prussia	48	51
Saxony	26	29
Norway	21	18
Sweden	16	24

The phrase "domestic trouble" includes a variety of causes, one class of which acts more especially on the female, while another acts more especially on the male. The fatal domestic troubles of husbands grow out of financial losses, business worry, ill health, drink, and the malignant dispositions of their wives. The fatal domestic troubles of wives result from some great bereavement, such as the death of a husband, father, mother, or child. Suicides from bereavement are not confined to civilized life. They occur principally among the women of savage tribes, but occasionally among the men also. The women of the Columbian and Mosquito Indians kill themselves during the season of mourning for their dead husbands. Indian fathers have ended their lives after the loss of a son.

It would be incorrect, however, to assign a majority of the widow-suicides, just mentioned, to grief. They result more often from the extreme isolation of savage widowhood, joined to the cruel customs to which this widowhood is subjected. When the corpse of a Tacully brave, for instance, is about to be consumed by fire, his wives must sit at his hands and feet, bowing their heads

upon his body until their hair is singed. After this they must carry his ashes about with them for two years, during all of which time they are treated as outcasts, and are forbidden to marry. It is not at all surprising that some widows commit suicide to escape this term of servitude.[1]

At other times desertion by the husband, and the family want caused thereby, are the exciting causes of wife-suicides in civilized life. An example, in point, happened in July, 1874. A woman, abandoned by her husband, and unable to support her child, killed herself rather than witness its lingering death by starvation.

The ways in which domestic troubles may lead to suicide are as various, nay, as devious even, as can be imagined. For example, nine Chinese maid-servants, witnesses of the broils and troubles of the families in which they severally lived, formed, each independently of the others, an identical resolution. Servant-girl nature being in far-away China much the same as everywhere else, the nine came together and detailed to each other the doings of their respective families. To their mutual surprise they discovered that the scenes of which they had been witnesses had impelled all to the same vow,—never to marry; so, to defeat, by anticipation, any attempt that might possibly be made to alter this resolution, they stitched themselves together by their clothing and plunged into a river, where they were drowned.

A story of a sadder tinge came, in the fall of 1874, from Stark, New Hampshire, where a delicate girl,—a school-teacher,—haunted by a dreadful curse, pronounced upon her by her angry grandmother, grew despondent,

[1] Bancroft, *Native Races*, vol. i, p. 121.

lost all interest in her occupation, and drowned herself in the river hard by her school.

A poet—but one of the coarser sort—has asked:

> "What mad lover ever dy'd
> To gain a soft and gentle bride?
> Or for a lady, tender-hearted,
> In purling streams or hemp departed?" [1]

Unfortunately, statistics give a not uncertain answer to the doubt implied in this couplet. Among the three in my collection of 265 suicides, whose deaths were assignable to moral causes, twelve were due to the one now under consideration. It numbered 222 victims, among a total of 5,114 suicides in France during 1869, and so exceptionally high a number as 701 among a total of 4,117 suicides occurring in Paris in 1871.

Suicides from this cause are far more numerous before than after the age of twenty-five; and they are more frequent in cities—metropolitan cities especially—than in rural districts. Judging from every-day facts and experiences, one would naturally expect such to be the case. The tendency of metropolitan life is to unduly stimulate the erotic passion, or at least to interfere with its tranquil development. Moreover, by allowing opportunities for unrestrained intercourse between the sexes, it leads to results, as respects the female more especially, the tendency of which is not seldom to suicide. Among the 52,126 suicides arranged by causes in Lisle's book, 239 are set down to illegitimate pregnancy (*grossesse hors marriage*). In the Italian returns for 1877, the number of females who killed themselves from the same cause was 18 per 1,000 of suicides from all causes.

[1] Butler, *Hudibras*, Part iii, Canto 1.

Not all kinds of love trouble, however, have an equal tendency to suicide. The elementary, romantic sentiment of youth shares in it now and again, though not nearly so often as the impetuous, blinding passion of more mature years. The harmless woes of the amative swain may be gathered from pastoral poetry; but the miseries of those who plunge into the seething flood of love, when they would be better occupied with ledger or knitting, are to be read in the daily papers and courts-of-justice records, and are finally laid to rest under many a green mound. The love troubles with a suicidal tendency which develop out of these more disturbed amatory relations are seduction, breach of promise, jealousy, unrequited love, and the forbiddal of bans.

Suicides from love troubles are more frequent among females than among males, but their preponderance in the former sex is not so great as might be supposed, in view of the popular belief relative to the special susceptibility of women. In searching for what is peculiar in the love troubles of men, it will be found that intemperance is a factor of some consequence. The song tells us that,

"Love is like the colic, cured with brandy, O!"

And, though it be open to some doubt whether Cognac has any such supplementary medicinal property, it is evident that not a few lovers act as if they were instinct with a living faith in its efficacy. The fact is patent to all, that many discarded or deceived lovers turn their affections to the bottle. It is, therefore, a question whether, in classifying suicides according to their causes, it were not more just to ascribe to intemperance many cases which, though committed by people in one kind of love

or other, are yet too narrowly classified with love troubles. There is such a thing, too, as love trouble caused by intemperance, and impelling to self-destruction. Against every tender feeling, women sometimes listen to the voice of duty and self-interest, when these command them to discard lovers who are incorrigible drunkards; and one of the occasional results of this exercise of personal right is a suicide, as exemplified by a case that occurred in October, 1873. A young clerk having been rejected by his sweetheart on account of his drinking habits, became greatly depressed. While in this state, he wrote a letter declaring his perfect sanity, and blew out his brains.

Suicides caused by desertion, breach of promise, and unrequited love, are comparatively frequent among women. Once in a while, too, one of the male sex is so stricken with grief at the falsity of his beloved, that he attempts to kill himself. An example of this occurred in Newark, N. J., during March, 1873. A lover whose affianced had been captured and married by a rival of low degree, was so overcome with grief and mortification that he swallowed half an ounce of croton oil. Medical skill saved him from impending death, and mayhap he still lives, let us hope to appreciate the wisdom in Wither's beautiful lyric, beginning,

> "Shall I, wasting in despair,
> Die because a woman's fair?"

CHAPTER V.

Intoxicants—Financial Losses and Embarrassments.

CONSIDERING the frequency of intoxication as a cause of suicide, the difficulty of obtaining statistics upon the subject is not a little surprising.[1] The relation of one to the other is entirely omitted in most statistical reports,—a circumstance which can hardly be intentional, since there is a general impression, supported by statistics at command, such as they are, that intemperance causes many suicides. Mere impressions, however, are not enough, and no study of the question can have any claim to acceptance that fails to include a quantitative statement of this relation. It is desirable to know what proportion of the total of suicides is directly or indirectly caused by intoxicants, more especially the intoxicant alcohol. It may be that the effect of intemperance on suicide is overestimated, or it may be the reverse; but the point cannot be settled in default of statistical information.

[1] None could be obtained at the Coroner's office of New York. Mr. John Toal, the obliging Secretary of that office, informed the author, in answer to a letter of inquiry sent October, 1874, that their annual statistics did not include any on this point. The Metropolitan Board of Health reports do not refer to it, and the National Census of 1870 is equally silent. With all due respect for our public boards, it must be said that they are the sources from which inquirers should be supplied with reliable facts on this important relation.

Referring to the vital statistics of France from 1836 to 1852, it is seen that out of a total of 52,126 suicides committed during that time, 738—of whom 656 were males—happened during a drunken debauch, and 2,464—of whom 2,105 were males—resulted from habitual drinking.[1] Referring to similar returns for Denmark, published in Copenhagen, 1878, the relative proportion of the cause drunkenness to all other causes of suicide in that country was forty per cent. The Danish statistics cover an uninterrupted period of thirty years, during which the large number of 16,111 suicides have occurred among a population of 2,000,000. In Norway and Sweden, also, where alcoholic beverages are freely consumed, a relatively large proportion of suicides is credited to drunkenness. In Italy, on the other hand, whose people are noted for their temperance, this vice caused only six out of every thousand suicides recorded in the official statistics of 1877, and a majority of these six occurred in the less thrifty provinces of Emilia and Rome.

(Much valuable information on the moral and industrial condition of the laboring classes in Europe may be obtained from the U. S. Reports on Labor in Europe, 1878. Nothing is said about suicide, but the bearing upon this act of many of the statements made in these reports will be evident to the student. The subject will come up for consideration further on.)

There is a striking agreement between the gross number of deaths by suicide and by alcoholic excesses respectively, but the agreement vanishes when this relation is examined in detail. Deaths by suicide are nearly twice as frequent among the Germans as deaths

[1] Lisle, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

by intemperance. Deaths among the Irish, on the other hand, are nearly five times more numerous by intemperance than by suicide. Unless, therefore, the number of deaths from intemperance is no fair test of the comparative sobriety of nations, it is not proven that those which have the highest rates of intemperance have also the highest number of suicides. The relations of agreement and difference now adverted to may be traced in the following table, taken from the United States Census of 1870.

SUICIDES AND DEATHS FROM ALCOHOL IN THE UNITED STATES.	AGGREGATE.	UNKNOWN.	TOTAL.	WHITE.	COLORED.	INDIAN.	TOTAL.	GERMAN.	SWEDES, NORWEGIANS, AND DANES.	IRELAND.	ENGLAND AND WALES.	SCOTLAND.	FRANCE.	OTHER NORTH OF EUROPE.	ITALY	OTHER SOUTH OF EUROPE.	CHINA AND JAPAN.	ALL OTHER.
Suicides, . .	1345	21	832	813	18	1	492	246	22	104	42	10	19	9	1	13	10	16
Deaths from Alcohol, .	1410	62	597	535	61	1	751	144	5	488	57	22	12	3	3	5		12

It is safe to say that at least seven *per cent.* of suicides are immediately due to drunkenness.[1] Of this number a majority kill themselves either during a debauch or in a state of *delirium tremens*. There are good grounds for the belief, however, that many so-called suicides occurring to people in this latter state, are really cases of accidental death. It sometimes happens that patients

[1] Von Ottingen estimates the proportion of suicides in Europe from drunkenness, gambling, and other vices, at one ninth of the whole.

with this disease jump out of their chamber windows to escape the threatening visions that surround them. These leaps, when fatal, are not infrequently ascribed to a suicidal intent, though the intention of suicide may have had nothing to do with them. When murder is soon followed by the suicide of the murderer, the two-fold crime is very often due to drunkenness. The husband—for in most instances the principals to the tragedy are married—returns home drunk, quarrels with his wife, and, seizing a weapon, kills her, his child, and himself. The records of police courts furnish many cases of this kind, and their increasing frequency is a fact of grave importance.

About twelve *per cent.* of the total of suicides are caused by financial embarrassments and loss of property. These affect the young, though not so much as the middle-aged and the old; the beginners in the struggle of life as well as those who have long borne the heat and burden of the day. They begin to act as causes of suicide about the age of twenty, and increase in force until the fiftieth year, after which their influence declines. Among young men they assume the shape of unsuccessful attempts to get on, which have the usual train of consequences, penury, suffering, and disgust of life; or, they are the fruit of fast living, which often leads through embezzlement to exposure, disgrace, the pistol, and death.

To middle-aged men who have accumulated capital, financial embarrassments come in the shape of heavy losses whether caused by widespread commercial crises, sudden and extreme fluctuations in values, or failure of some business enterprise. Speculators in values are particularly liable to suicide when they meet with heavy reverses; and this accounts satisfactorily for the relatively

high percentage of suicides in mining districts. Theodore Hook tells a story which forcibly illustrates the personal effect of losses of this kind. One day while on a visit to Lord Hertford at Sudbourne he fell into familiar chat with his only companion in the coach, a melancholy man with a querulous voice given out in tones of aggrieved complaint. "Sir," said the stranger, "you may have known unfortunate men, possibly, in your day; you may, for aught I know, be an unfortunate man yourself; but I do not believe there is such another unfortunate man as I am in this whole world. No man ever had more brilliant prospects than I have had in my time, and every one of them, on the eve of fulfilment, has been blighted. 'T was but the other day that I thought I would buy a ticket in the lottery. I did so, stupid ass that I was, and took a sixteenth. Sir, I had no sooner bought it than I had repented of my folly, and feeling convinced that it would be a blank I got rid of it to a friend, who I knew would thank me for the favor and at the same time save me from another disappointment. By Jove! sir, would you believe it? I know you won't; but it is true—it turned up £30,000." "Heaven and earth!" exclaimed Hook, "it is incredible. If it had happened to me I should certainly have cut my throat." "Well," said the stranger, "of course you would, and so did I," and baring his neck he exposed to Hook's horror-stricken gaze a freshly healed wound that reached from ear to ear.[1] But, upon the whole, the great crises in the history of trade and speculation which prostrate solid houses and desolate firesides, do not cause so many suicides as might naturally be feared, and for the reason that they

[1] *Recollections of Men and Things: Last Leaves from the Journal of Julian Charles Young*, A.M. N. Y., 1875.

usually call into immediate action mental qualities which antagonize the peculiar moral conditions on which the impulse to suicide immediately depends.

It has been observed by the Registrar-General of England, Dr. Farr, that poverty and wealth are not of themselves causes of suicide; a remark true, doubtless, as respects wealth, but not so unquestionably so as respects poverty. A not inconsiderable number of suicides are committed by paupers and those struggling against penury. This is especially the case in large cities,[1] where pressure of competition is great, and efforts to secure a livelihood are maintained under many grevious disadvantages; where, too, failure is often discouraging and disastrous. Every thing that adds to the difficulty of this struggle increases the tendency to suicide. For example, it is affirmed that ever since the financial embarrassments of the Italian city of Florence began, and the enterprise of her citizens was first crippled by heavy taxes, her suicides have steadily increased, to the extent that four years ago they were six times greater in proportion to population than the suicides of Paris.[2] Due regard being had to these and similar qualifications, the Registrar-General is doubtless correct in stating that the mere fact of poverty or wealth creates of itself no predisposition to suicide. Careful inquiry will always discover that suicides related apparently to want, or its opposite, are really due to sudden transitions from affluence to poverty, or from poverty to affluence even, as has sometimes, though rarely, happened. For, strange though it seem, suicides caused by sudden and unexpected wind-

[1] The proportion of suicides to population among the London pauper class is 4 in 10,000.

[2] Florence correspondence of the *New York Times*, May 11, 1878.

falls are not unknown. Some persons' heads are soon turned by unlooked-for prosperity. "In the celebrated South-sea speculations," says a writer whose name cannot be recalled at present, "it was remarked that few lost their reason in consequence of the loss of their property, but that many were stimulated to madness by the too abrupt accumulation of enormous wealth. In other lotteries, as in the lottery of life, dreadful effects have, perhaps, more frequently arisen from the prizes than the blanks! It has often happened that an adventurer, in addition to the ordinary price of his ticket, has paid for his ill-gotten wealth by the forfeiture of his reason; the same turn of the wheel which has raised him into affluence has sunk him into idiocy, and, by no advantageous change, has transformed the mendicant into the maniac." The essential truth of these observations is enforced by a recent suicide. A married man in whose family, it should be stated, suicide is hereditary, was so overcome with joy on learning that he had fallen heir to a legacy of twenty-five thousand francs that he went mad and drowned himself.

CHAPTER VI.

Occupation—Habitation.

THE relation of occupation to suicide has been made the theme of some important observations by Dr. Farr.[1] It appears from this gentleman's researches that "the tendency to suicide is least among those who carry on out-of-door occupations, and greatest among artisans who are occupied in-doors, and have little muscular exercise." The tendency to suicide among masons, carpenters, and butchers, whose trades bring them a good deal in the open air, was, during the year covered by these researches (1841), 1 in 9,332, against 1 in 1,669 tailors, shoemakers, and bakers, whose trades are followed in-doors. This is in the relation of 1 in the former class to 5.6 in the latter. When comparison is made in relation to population, the difference between the classes is seen to be even greater. In London, the percentage of suicides to population among out-of-door workers, is 1 in 10,000, whilst among in-door workers it is 7.43 in 10,000. And it may be added that suicide is quite infrequent among sailors and fishermen.

The conclusion reached by Dr. Farr on the basis of a wide classification, is confirmed by the results of my own

[1] *Appendix to the Third Annual Report of the Registrar-General of England.*

more limited inquiries. In my collection of suicides, already referred to, occupations are recorded in ninety-nine instances. Submitting these to a like classification, we reach the following result:

Occupations chiefly sedentary or in-door. — Artists 2, teachers 4, chemist 1, musician 1, lawyer 1, bankers 4, tinsmiths 2, tailors 2, mechanics 3, saloon-keepers 6, grocers 2, machinists 2, cooper 1, druggists 2, printers 3, engraver 1, barber 1, lithographer 1, gilder 1, cabinet-maker 1, pattern-maker 1, boiler-maker 1, shoemaker 1, picture-frame-maker 1, watchmaker 1, plumber 1, blaster 1, publisher 1, merchants 7, policy-dealer 1, employees 12, student 1,=70.

Occupations chiefly active or out-of-door.—Army officers 3, physicians 3, civil-engineer 1, contractor 1, manufacturer 1, oil-operator 1, builder 1, real-estate broker 1, auctioneer 1, blaster 1, farmer 1, butcher 1, sailors 4, sign-painter 1, boatman 1, carpenter 1, peddler 1, employees 4,=28.

The ratios established by Dr. Farr are not fully confirmed by these lists. But this is not material. Ratios vary doubtless according to circumstances. The important fact to be recognized is that suicide is more frequent among persons who pursue in-door occupations. The ratio of comparative liability may be safely put down as two to one.

That confinement is one of the reasons of the difference just indicated is an assertion that carries its own proof. Its mode of action is easily explained. Let us compare the work of the laboring man with that of the

printer, and note the result, more especially as it relates to health and happiness. The laborer works in the open air, where the food he eats and the alcohol he drinks, if he drink any, are speedily converted into vital force; where, moreover, the products of his tissue wear and tear are amply oxydized and eliminated. The printer's appetite for food may be nearly, if not quite so good as the laborer's, but as a rule his nutritive functions are not equally vigorous. The food he eats is not so well assimilated; nor does he get so completely rid of those products which result from expended tissue. He will not be as healthy as the out-of-door laborer, nor, of course, will he be as happy. But additional drawbacks to mental and physical health are inherent in in-door occupations. The concentration of mind for many consecutive hours at a time, which they demand, causes so great an expenditure of nerve force, that the time remaining for sleep is not enough to effect its restoration. Anxiety and worry are often added. Sleeplessness follows sooner or later, and then all the conditions exist for causing not merely exhaustion of nerve force, but a break-up, a molecular disintegration, as it is called, of nerve tissue. Relief from the pain and misery of this added burden is unfortunately often sought in intoxicating drink, and found too, it must be acknowledged, but at increased risk to body and mind. Sooner or later some of the many who foolishly add the fuel alcohol to the fire of worry, go and cut their throats.

Thus, we arrive at a good physiological reason for the greater, increasingly greater, frequency of suicides among factory hands and those generally who are employed in manufacturing centres. Of course, there are other reasons for this besides the physiological one. The more

attentively we study the subject of suicide, the clearer grows the fact that it is a resultant of many causes, social as well as economic, pathological as well as economic and social. Its fair comprehension requires that each class of causes be allotted its due weight. As a matter of fact it is found that, along with such influences as tend to suicide by the damage they do to personal health, there are others with a like tendency that have their proper spheres in the contests between labor and capital, and in the social relations of operatives to one another, as friends, lovers, husbands, wives, fathers, mothers, and the like. Some of these influences have already been referred to, and the more important of the remainder of them will be considered in another place. Suffice it to state here, as the derivative law of the relation of occupation to suicide, that, other things being equal, an out-of-door life diminishes the tendency to suicide.

It is curious to observe how the special occupation of a person will sometimes determine the mode in which he puts an end to his life. A tinsmith committed suicide in September, 1874, by swallowing muriatic acid, a substance in common use in his trade. A picture-frame-maker ended his days by a dose of sulphuric acid, a fluid in frequent use in his particular craft. Perhaps the most striking examples of this relation recorded in the United States, are two that occurred a few years ago. One was the suicide of a blaster, who blew himself to atoms with the gunpowder he was to have used for blasting rock. The other was that of a young coal-worker, Prussian-born, who, during midday recess, when his companion workmen were dining, plunged into a seething furnace and perished after a moment of what must have been dreadful agony.

The industrial relations of men in their wider meaning, govern the tendency to suicide. These relations are not the same in different places; for which reason, when suicide is mentioned in connection with them, it is said to vary according to habitation. There can be no reasonable doubt that such is the case; only, it should be remembered that the word habitation includes many other circumstances besides mere residence. It includes, in truth, all the relations of men to nature, and to the cultivation and distribution of natural products. Hence, too, it comprises occupation, and much besides. It deals with communities in much the same way that occupation deals with individuals. Taking communities as they are found distributed over the face of a country, it shows how the tendency to suicide is modified as regards frequency —as regards even the means of its accomplishment—by the facts of habitation. A survey of the two great divisions of human industry, the manufacturing and the agricultural, shows that the tendency to suicide is greater in the former. Let us compare six agricultural with a like number of manufacturing States in our American Union. As representative agricultural States we shall take Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, and Illinois. Their average percentage of suicides is 2.183 to 100,000 population. On the other hand, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, and New York, give an average of 4.497 to an equal number of population. The same holds true in the nations of the Old World. In all England and Wales the proportion of suicides during 1873, was 65 per million population, while that of London was 83 per million. The Italian provincial capitals have a suicide rate of 105 per million, the smaller towns 23, and the rural districts 29 per million. The low rate of suicides in the smaller Italian towns,

shows their superiority, in the conditions necessary to happiness and well-being, over the larger cities and the agricultural regions.[1] Indeed, it is a remarkable fact, as showing the effect of drudgery and scant subsistence on the personal estimate of the value of human life, that while in Italy the tendency to suicide decreases among males as we go toward the country, it increases among females. There are 87 suicides among men to 13 among women in the Italian provincial capitals; 80 among men to 20 among women in the smaller towns; and 75 among men to 25 among women in the rural districts.[2] No one who knows the increasing slavery of women's lives in Italy, the further they are removed from the centres of luxury and refinement, need be told the reasons for this growth of female suicide in the Italian rural districts. The proportion of suicides to population in the large French towns is 169 to the million inhabitants, as against 104 to the million in the French country districts.[3]

A satisfactory explanation of the effect of habitation on suicide will be found in the circumstances which differentiate a manufacturing from an agricultural population. These circumstances are numerous; so numerous indeed that their bare mention would occupy too much space. Suffice it to observe that they comprise all the differences between life spent in a bustling community, eager for wealth, worshipping false gods in every direction, and life passed under the more placid atmosphere of the country,—under every advantage as respects health and happiness in the one case, and under almost every disadvantage in the other.

On a superficial view it might be thought that it is because metropolitan cities are centres of swarming popu-

[1] *Popolizatione Movimento, etc.* [2] *Ibid.*

[3] Block, Maurice, *L' Europe Politique et Sociale*, Paris, 1869.

lations that they have such high rates of suicides; and, in a measure, this is true enough. But it is not the essential truth. It is not mere number of inhabitants that is responsible for the known tendency of city life to favor suicide. Moral tone has a great deal more to do with it. M. Guerry, in the course of his valuable researches into the moral statistics of France,[1] which, though not of recent date, are none the less valuable on that account, has shown that the Departments which give the highest suicide rates are not those which contain the largest number of populous cities, but that the frequency of suicide relative to population is chiefly governed by degree of proximity to Paris. The same is true of the capitals of other European countries, each one of which sends out an influence in favor of suicide which circles in ever-widening waves until its force is ultimately spent. It would seem, therefore, that the capital cities act as great moral pest-centres, whose evil influence extends to the remotest confines of their respective lands, and is most felt the nearer they are approached from these confines.

Even so apparently accidental a circumstance as the means used to commit suicide is governed by habitation. This fact deserves a passing notice. In cities where all means of self-destruction are accessible, every mode of suicide is practised, though shooting, hanging, and throat-cutting are most common. In agricultural districts, hanging is preferred to all other modes; and in the pioneer States and Territories of the American Union, where nearly every one, female as well as male, is familiar with the use of fire-arms, guns and pistols are the weapons handiest and most generally used.

[1] *Statistique Morale de France*, quoted in Lisle, *Du Suicide*, p. 30. They cover a period of sixteen years, from 1836 to 1852, and the conclusion they point to, as above, is borne out by all later statistics.

CHAPTER VII.

Race—Nationality.

THERE are marked differences between races and nations as regards tendency to suicide. The negro is not near so prone to it as the white man. While white men destroy themselves in the United States at an average rate of forty in a million inhabitants, black men do likewise at the rate of only four in a million, or ten times less frequently.

There are many reasons for this great difference, but the chief of these is probably the indolent, self-satisfied, and happy-go-lucky disposition of the negro. Despite his emotional susceptibility in some directions, the negro is a matter-of-fact being. He possesses the faculty of seeing most things as they are,—in a shrewd and sensible light. This, as we shall see further on, is the noticeable feature of the objective temperament,—the temperament least prone to be influenced by causes tending to suicide. It is neither an exclusive property of the negro nor of semi-civilized peoples generally, though certainly a prominent feature of the semi-civilized state. Only those communities, or races, that have made progress in civilization, present a high rate of suicides, for suicide is a crime which results, in great measure, from the personal and social influences of civilized life. Such being the fact, it

needs no argument to show why the negro, who yields comparatively little to these influences, even in America, shows a tendency to suicide far short of his more advanced, but, as regards the present inquiry, less fortunate, brother.

But, though not often led to commit suicide in isolation and secrecy, the negro, naturally so emotional and imitative, is liable to the contagion of a suicide epidemic, especially when he is massed with other individuals of his own race. Bates noticed a singular method of revenge which was sometimes indulged in by the slaves on a Central American plantation, and which consisted in joint suicides *en masse*. "They will form a general resolution to poison themselves all round," he says, "and will carry it out with the greatest stoicism,"[1] and this without being necessarily driven to it by ill treatment, like the Indians of Mexico and Peru, whom their Spanish conquerors subjected to cruel slavery. He quotes Tschudi's mention of the case of a planter who was universally esteemed for his kindly disposition, but who yet saw his negro slaves, from day to day, "poisoning themselves off by the dozen."[2] Pim mentions an epidemic of suicide among the Chinese coolies at work on the Panama railroad.[3]

It confirms the opinion relative to the fostering influence of civilization on suicide,—that the North American Indian, who, it is almost unnecessary to say, has been brought much less under civilizing influences than the negro, shows only one suicide to his eighteen.

Aside from the peculiar influences of civilization, however, the causes of suicide are often identical among all

[1] *Central America, the West Indies, and South America*, edited and extended by H. W. Bates, London, 1878.

[2] *Loc. cit.* [3] Bedford Pim, *Gate of the Pacific.*

races, civilized or not, though among those that are uncivilized there seems to be a preponderance of childish suicides, such as are instigated by revenge. The Kingsmill Islanders commit suicide by hanging or drowning to bring disgrace on people with whom they have quarrelled.[1] But other, and, so to speak, less unworthy motives impel to suicide among savages. The women of the Talkotin Indians, on the Columbia river, kill themselves under depression of spirits from over-work,—especially the widows, whose existence for some years after the decease of their husbands is wretched in the extreme.[2] Instances of suicides among savages from grief have been given on a previous page, and others are mentioned by Bancroft as having occurred in various Indian tribes of America[3]; but they have no suicides from jealousy, disappointed love, money losses, and the rest, for the obvious reason that such causes are not at work in the communal life of nomadic tribes.

Passing now to the influence of nationality, it is known that nations differ from each other in their suicide rates, and that, too, very widely in some instances, as may be seen in the table on page 199.

The marked differences shown can only be satisfactorily explained, if at all, on due consideration of the circumstances peculiar to each nation, including their points of contrast. It would be necessary to note differences in comparative national temperaments, and industries; differences in distribution of population—the massing of people in large towns tending to increase the percentage of suicides; and differences in the material con-

[1] Admiral Wilkes, *Narrative.*

[2] Wake, *Evolution of Morality*, vol. i, p. 238.

[3] *Native Races of the Pacific Coast*, vol. i.

Nation.	Number of suicides in 1,000,000 population.
Portugal	7
Spain	14
Ireland	16
Russia	25
Italy	26
Finland	30
Scotland	35
United States	40
England and Wales	68
Norway	94
Sweden	66
Belgium	55
Austria, Cislethian	84
Bavaria	73
Baden	109
France	110
Prussia	123
Wurtemberg	164
Switzerland	206
Denmark	288
Saxony	251

dition of the masses—for severe labor, with small wages and scant food, cause the same tendency whether in town or country. The high rate of suicides among women in those rural districts of Italy where their days are spent in toil and drudgery a-field, has been already noted, and the same hard lot is doubtless responsible for many suicides among both sexes wherever they are overworked and poorly paid. Again, moral differences would have to be considered. Nations whose members are most given to compromises with their own or others' passions, who are most sensual, wilful, and impulsive, and who are least controlled by religious feeling, are liable to have high rates of suicide. There is no doubt that the precepts of religion have a powerfully restraining influence over

would-be suicides. It would seem indeed that the suicide rate of every nation mentioned in the foregoing list depends largely on the degree of its religious faith, and the constancy with which its men and women resort to religious comfort in their sore needs. This is unquestionably the effect of religious influences irrespective of the intellectual, and, in some respects, even the moral condition of communities acted on. The suicide rates in Russia and Ireland are low, though the state of the peasantry of both countries could not be much worse. The recent famine in the latter country, and the land agitation going on there, have been instrumental in throwing much light on the want, misery, and helplessness of the Irish peasantry. Travellers in Russia, too, can hardly find suitable words to express the miserable condition of the peasantry of that country, particularly in its great agricultural region of Tamboff, where the rigor of winter, the scarcity and high price of food, the low wages, absence of timber for house-building, and frequency of epidemics, often render their condition deplorable in the extreme. In Kostroma, and other Russian provinces, the peasantry are so overloaded with debts saddled on them by extortionate creditors that their lot is often pitiable to behold. Only a short while ago, one of the unfortunate debtors of Kostroma, seeing his family starving to death, cut his throat at the door of his creditor whose mercy he had vainly implored. Yet because the spirit of Christian resignation and content is nurtured alike in the Roman Catholic and Greek Churches, and because they have the courage to declare anathema and eternal punishment against self-murder, the natural tendency of social and personal misery to increase the number of suicides is kept under control among their adherents.

But when every thing is said, it will still be found that the perplexities involved in the comparative liabilities of different nations to suicide are very great. How are we, for instance, to account for the marked difference in this respect between the Norwegians and Swedes? They are to all intents and purposes one people, branches of the old Scandinavian race, and have the same social, religious, and political institutions. Observing travellers like Bayard Taylor[1] and Ross Brown[2] place them on the same moral level, and they are alike in temperament. It is possible to account, at least in part, for the excess of suicide in Norway, by the extreme poverty and intemperance of the Norwegian working classes. In Sweden the condition of the working classes is better, and the temperance movement of the last few years has lessened the consumption of ardent spirits and the amount of crime.

The average wage of the Norwegian mechanic is 60 cents per day. With three hundred working days in the year, this gives an annual income of $180. His cash outlay for intoxicating drinks during the same time is $33.69. Norwegian whiskey is three times stronger than Swedish, and the usual draught is a tumblerful. The proportion of paupers in the country districts is thirty-eight to every thousand inhabitants. Few workmen save any money or go to any church.

In Sweden, on the contrary, the condition of the laboring class is improving. Owing to a succession of good crops, a rise has taken place in the price of iron and lumber, wages have increased, and model dwelling-houses are in process of construction. Pauperism, whiskey-drinking, and crime are diminishing.

[1] *Northern Travel*, N. Y., 1859. [2] *Land of Thor*, N. Y., 1870.

Besides all this, while the Swedes are satisfied with their political institutions, and conservative, the Norwegians have been in a state of political turmoil for years past.

By a careful scrutiny of the circumstances peculiar to each nation, joined to international comparisons, it might be possible to account for the differences that exist in the suicide rates of various countries; but such scrutiny and comparison would require a volume to themselves.

It might be possible also to account for some of these differences on ethnological grounds; though no definite conclusion seems justifiable from facts which defy all attempts to group them under any comprehensive theory. For example, dividing the Aryan race into (1) Aryo-Romans, and (2) Slavo-Germans, we find that among the branches of the former, the Greeks were but little, while the Romans, during their later history, were much addicted to suicide; that the Gauls were more prone to it than the Celts, and that while in the present day the French have a comparatively high percentage of voluntary deaths, the percentage among the Irish, Portugese, and Spanish is low. The same differences are found among the Slavo-Germans, of whom the Russians and Poles have a low suicide rate, while the Goths, Scandinavians, and Germans have a high, and in some instances the highest rate. But, while these discrepancies exist, and render any solution of the question of suicide difficult on ethnological grounds, it is remarkable, as regards the Teutonic branch of the Slavo-German world, that all its offshoots—Goths, Scandinavians, Germans, and the subdivisions of these latter—present a higher average of suicide to population than any extant offshoots from the Celtic branch of the same race. That some race pecu-

liarities lie at the bottom of this remarkable fact seems a legitimate inference, especially when it is remembered that the majority of suicides in the United States are found among the foreign-born population, of which, as in the Old World, the North European, and more especially German element, shows the strongest suicidal tendency, while the Irish shows the least. (According to the New York State census for 1875, there were 2.91 suicides to the 10,000 native males between the ages of 15 and 80, and 3.91 to the same number of foreign males. The proportion among native females was 0.46, and among foreign females 1.04.)

Before concluding this chapter, there are some facts connected with the geographical distribution of suicide which deserve to be noted. On examining the report of the Registrar-General of England for 1873, it is observable that while the average suicide rate for all England and Wales was sixty-five per million living persons, it was eighty-eight per million in the south-eastern counties of Surrey, Kent, Sussex, Hants, and Berks, among a population chiefly rural. While such was the case on the eastern coast, an equal number of counties on the western coast, those of Wilts, Dorset, Devon, Cornwall, and Somerset, with a population also chiefly rural, had a suicide rate of only fifty-one per million. Doubtless there are many and sufficient reasons for this difference, which is all the more remarkable as it occurs in the same country and between nearly the same parallels of latitude. To mention some of these reasons here. The south-eastern counties of England are more densely peopled than the south-western; they are nearer the moral influence of London; they have a harsher climate; and they are exposed to severe north-east storms, which prove very

destructive to their crops and live stock. The farmers and stock-raisers of these counties are therefore periodically exposed to some of the physical and moral influences which tend to suicide,—a depressing climate and sudden reverses of fortune; while they, in common with their fellow-inhabitants, are subjected to the unfavorable influences that proceed from density of population and proximity to London. It is possible that other and even more potent influences than all these may be at work, but in the absence of any precise knowledge of such, those already mentioned help to explain the higher rate of suicide in the south-eastern counties of England.

Again, it is shown by reliable statistics that of the five great departments into which France is divided, the department of the north gives fifty *per cent.* of the total of suicides committed in that country.[1] As in the instance of the south-eastern English counties, so here, there are reasons for this large proportion. First of all, there is the proximity to Paris, on the moral influence of which enough has been said elsewhere. Then, the department in question is densely peopled, and is the seat, moreover, of a large part of the manufacturing industry of the entire country. The department of the east, which has the next largest percentage of suicides, is only second to that of the north in population and manufactures. It is not necessary to repeat what has been already said relative to the injurious consequences of factory work to health and morals. Nor will it be necessary to insist at greater length on the tendency of this and its accompanying facts, overwork, struggle for maintenance, and the rest, to increase suicide.

[1] The proportions are: North, 50 *per cent.*; East, 16 *per cent.*; West, 14; Centre, 11; South, 9.

A recent observing traveller in Eastern France, and kindly critic, speaks as follows regarding the condition of the work-people of that section of the country:

"The working hours here (Morez) are terribly long: from five o'clock in the morning till seven at night the bulk of the population are at their posts—men, women and young people—children, I was going to say. * * * The wages are low, three or four francs a day being the maximum; and as the cost of living is high here, it is only by the conjoint labors of all the members of a household that it can be kept together." [1]

For a third and last illustration of the geographical distribution of suicide, we will come back to the New World and cast an eye on what may, with propriety, be termed a suicide map of the United States. In the year 1860, by far the larger ratio of suicides on this map—81 per cent.—were committed in the Pacific district. It was there the gold excitement prevailed at the time; men made or lost fortunes in a day; drink abounded; licentiousness had full sway; religion and law were disregarded. In a word, all the demoralizing influences were in operation that tend to insanity and suicide. Turning to the census of 1870, we find the same preponderance of suicide repeated in the great centres of gold-mining excitement. California had 84 suicides in a population of 582,031; which is in the proportion of 14.432 to every 100,000 of inhabitants. During the sixteen years next previous to 1878, six hundred and eighty seven persons had killed themselves in San Francisco alone. A majority of these unfortunates were foreigners, and many of them had neither home nor family. They went to San Francisco to grow wealthy, not by patient toil,

[1] Bentham-Edwards, *Holidays in Eastern France*, New York, 1879, p. 191.

but by some stroke of good fortune, and failing, they gambled, drank to excess, and at last killed themselves. In the year 1878, there was one suicide in San Francisco to every 3,000 inhabitants, as against one to 8,000 in New York, one to 10,000 in Brooklyn, onè to 14,000 in Philadelphia. Again, the census of 1870 shows that in Nevada there were five suicides among a population of 48,711; which is in the relatively high proportion of 8.516 suicides to the 100,000 inhabitants. In both California and Nevada, there was a large percentage of population which seldom or never came under religious influences, since, in both, church accommodation was at the time very defective. Instead of churches, gambling places and dens of all infamy abounded in profusion.

Including, of course, these regions, our suicide map of the United States gives the largest percentage of suicide to population in the Western States, into which there is a great influx of immigrants who are subject to peculiar risks as respects physical health from change of climate, and to the depressing moral influences of loneliness, home-sickness, and penury. Besides, many of these immigrants start out bankrupt in means and health, or fall into evil habits on being released from the moral restraints of the society to which they were accustomed. Next to the Western States, stand those of the East, where the evils of large cities, dense population, and competing industries are at work. And last on the map come the Southern States, where, since the War of the Rebellion, industry of all kinds has retrograded and a general torpor has numbed the people.

But in treating of suicide, as of all questions that are governed by a confusing mass of moral and physical causes ever entering into new combinations, and giving un-

foreseen results, it is advisable to refrain from drawing hard and fast conclusions. For instance, though it be true in all probability that a densely-peopled manufacturing district will yield a high percentage of suicides, it is not a universal truth. New Jersey, a manufacturing State, with a population of 108.91 souls to the square mile, has a suicide rate of only 2.306 to the 100,000 inhabitants. On the other hand, Vermont, an agricultural State, with but 33.37 souls to the square mile, has a suicide rate as high as 7.563 to an equal number of inhabitants.

To arrive at a knowledge of the causes influencing percentages of suicide, it would seem as though it were necessary to make a separate study of every State, and county even, in order to ascertain the moral and physical influences special to each. A few attempts have been already made to trace out the operation of some of these influences in England, France, and the Scandinavian lands, and now it will be advisable to dwell a moment on such of them as may be observed under the somewhat peculiar conditions of the United States. Looking again at the State of Nevada, with a population of 0.41 to the square mile, we find it having a suicide rate of 8.516 to the 100,000 souls, which is the highest of all the States except California. Nevada was unknown territory in 1858; but the discovery of its great mineral wealth, and of the Comstock lode in particular, caused it to be rapidly peopled with immigrants from all quarters, of every degree of fortune and merit, with or without religious and moral convictions,—a motley throng hungry for wealth, and as ready to clutch it over the gambling table as to earn it by honest toil. It needs must be that the rate of suicide is high in such a community, where all the causes

are at work which produce a dangerous tension of the nerves and mind. It is a significant fact that both here and in California church accommodation is very defective, so that a large number of persons miss the bracing influences of prayer and religious teaching.

Not to pursue the various threads of this tangled inquiry to a tedious length, it seems already evident enough that each race, nation, province, nay parish, even, and town, has some one or more peculiarities which place it in a special relation to the question of suicide. It seems, furthermore, that without a knowledge of what these peculiarities are, it were next to impossible to reach true explanations of the different suicide rates of different localities. This much may be said without presumption, that wherever one locality reveals a higher percentage of suicides than another, it will be in consequence of some moral and physical influences peculiar to the place. It will be owing to the depressing effect of hard labor, combined with want and worry; or to licentiousness and drunkenness; or to absence of religious faith; or to some other cause which a knowledge of the social life of each particular community would reveal.

CHAPTER VIII.

Atmospheric and Climatic Influences.

CERTAIN states of health marked by languor and mental depression,—a depression in which the horizon of life contracts and shuts out the hope of a brighter future,—such states predispose to suicide. They are chiefly due to mal-assimilation and deranged secretion. They will receive more attention in a future chapter.

There is one wide source of these morbid feelings in the circumambient atmosphere, with its changes of temperature, moisture, and pressure. Alfieri has declared that his intellect was always most active when the pressure of the atmosphere was greatest. He labored under mental hebetude during the prevalence of solstitial and equinoctial winds. 'I likewise," he says, "perceived that the force of my imagination, the ardor of enthusiasm, and capability of invention were possessed by me in a higher degree in the middle of winter or in the middle of summer, than during the intermediate periods." He thought this peculiarity common to people of delicate nerves; and in this opinion he is correct.[1]

The irritating effect of a sustained high temperature, accompanied by moisture, is sometimes very great. The generation of nerve force is thereby impeded; the mus-

[1] *Life*, Boston, 1877, p. 132.

cles lose their tone; the nutritive and secretory functions are languidly and imperfectly discharged. The mind, reflecting this general torpor, sinks into despondency.

Especially irritating to some persons is prolonged heat accompanied by drought. It rouses in them excito-motor impulses difficult to control,—impulses to inflict violence on themselves or others.

With respect to the comparative influences of various atmospheric conditions on the tendency to suicide, it would appear that heat is more predisposing thereto than either cold or moisture. It was formerly believed that cold, damp climates were especially provocative of this tendency. This theory was started to account for the alleged greater frequency of suicides in England than elsewhere during the last century. If it were correct, Holland ought to have (what she has not) as many suicides as England. It is certain that self-inflicted deaths are more numerous during hot weather; and it may be also true—though of this there is less certainty—that they are more frequent in dry weather. Among 1,151 such deaths recorded by independent observers[1] in Berlin, Hamburg, Westminster, and Paris, 257 occurred in the first quarter of the year, 299 in the second, 335 in the third, and 260 in the fourth. The researches of M. Provôst in Geneva showed the greatest number of suicides, 19, in April. June and August had each 17; July, 15; October, 14; May, 13; March, 10; November, 9; September, 6; January and February, each 5; and December, 3. Among 1,139 suicides recorded in Italy in 1877, 152, or the greatest number, occurred in June. May had 126; April, 125; July, 119; August, 99. The

[1] Groham in *Hufel. Journal*, *l. c.*—Falret, *Traité du Suicide*, *l. c.*—Esquirol, *Malad. Ment.*, *l. c.*—See Quetelet, *Sur l'Homme*, Brussels, 1836.

numbers during the other months dwindled from 82 in March to 66 in September; but the coldest months had not so small a share as the fall months and December. The following table of suicides in Italy, during three years, shows how steadily these proportions are maintained.

SUICIDE AND SEASON OF YEAR.[1]

MONTH.	1875.	1876.	1877.
	NO. OF SUICIDES.	NO. OF SUICIDES.	NO. OF SUICIDES.
January,	64	71	81
February,	53	85	78
March,	82	87	82
April,	93	99	125
May,	117	105	126
June,	113	121	152
July,	74	107	119
August,	90	98	99
September,	64	68	66
October,	56	73	73
November,	58	50	70
December,	58	60	68

Although, therefore, suicides do not increase regularly in number from January to July, and diminish regularly from July to December, still it is certain that they are most numerous in summer, next so in spring, then in autumn, and least so in winter. Of one thousand suicides classified under the various seasons,

316 happened in summer,
277 " " spring,
219 " " autumn,
188 " " winter.[2]

[1] *Popolizatione Movimento*, etc.

[2] Maurice Block, *op. cit.*

In connection with these facts, let us attend to the following: According to all health returns, the most sickly season is summer, the next most sickly is spring, the next autumn, and the least sickly is winter. All this corresponds exactly with the proportion of suicides to season. Again, the hottest months of the year are those in which the largest number of cases of insanity occur. Consequently they are the most trying to the nerves. Finally, it may be remarked that people who live at altitudes no higher than five hundred feet above sea-level, and particularly on malarious soil, are more affected by nervous disorders of malarial origin, including such as have a special tendency to suicide, than dwellers on inland tracts and mountain regions.

In any attempt to gauge the relation of climate to suicide, we must give chief weight to its physical effects. Its moral effects are secondary to these. The influence of glad spring, deepening by contrast the gloom of some morbidly irritable dispositions, or of sad autumn awakening in contemplative minds dreams of vanished joys,—these do not suffice to account for any, except it may be some very unusual acts of self-destruction.

When all the available evidence has been produced, the question of climate in relation to suicide will be found to have narrowed itself to one of season and healthfulness of location. Climate proper, or difference in latitude, has little, if any, influence on the rate of suicide. The table given on a preceding page[1] shows that it is higher in Norway than in Austria; and, reversing latitude, higher in Switzerland than in Sweden. But, in point of fact, the ratio of suicide to population, the world over, *is chiefly governed by political and industrial*

[1] See *ante*, p. 199.

causes; whence it follows that by far the major rate of suicides to population happens *along the course of the middle isotherm, with a mean annual temperature of* 47° *to* 53° *Fahr.* Within this belt are gathered all the causes of that wear and worry which impel to suicide,—large cities, dense population, rapid industrial development, fierce competition, great risks and losses, a ceaseless, eager striving after some object which is pursued at the cost of heavy draughts on health and content. All these have now been considered as fully as the endurance of most readers will allow. Their effects on personal health, and the relation of physical disease to suicide, will form the subject of the next chapter.

PART SECOND.

PERSONAL CAUSES OF SUICIDE.

CHAPTER I.

General Considerations.

THOUGH every cause of suicide is personal in its ultimate field of action, this and the two succeeding chapters have been reserved for a consideration of those specially individual states—bodily and mental derangements—on which the impulse to suicide proximately depends in a majority of instances. However much these derangements may prove to be under the influence of exterior circumstances, they nevertheless constitute a group of factors in themselves, with laws of combination and action peculiarly their own.

Until of late years, public attention was so absorbed in the mental and moral aspects of suicide, and so oblivious of its physical aspect, that it had come to be all but universally regarded as *prima facie* evidence of either lunacy or moral depravity. There was seemingly no thought of that middle explanation which is now growing more and more familiar to our minds, and which, without necessarily involving the supposition of either insanity or depravity, points to ill-health as a not infrequent cause of suicide.

One of the important conclusions of experimental psychology is, that mental manifestations are conditioned

by states of the body. Mental vigor presupposes corporeal vigor. Mental impairment denotes organic disease or functional derangement. The latter of these concomitances is still understood, however, in a too narrow sense by some writers. Supposing it to mean that there is a necessary connection between impairment of mind and central nervous disease, they substitute this misapprehension for the true proposition, and then proceed to combat it by pointing to the fact, which is not disputed, that it is sometimes impossible to find traces of central nervous disease where there has been marked and even persistent mental derangement. From this they conclude that there is such a thing as mental derangement without organic disease.

But now let us understand what the true proposition says. It does not affirm that the condition of the nerve centres fundamental to all disorders of mind is necessarily, or even commonly, one of disease in the coarse meaning of the term,—molar as opposed to molecular disease. Nor does it affirm that the nerve centres themselves are always at fault. It does affirm that the primary seat of disease is often exterior to these centres, and furthermore that the morbid states progressing in them, whether central or reflex, may exist in any degree from obscure changes of nutrition to palpable disorganization of structure. Hence, failure to discover a physical basis of mental impairment in the nerve centres, is no proof that such basis does not exist, and for two reasons: the prime irritant may be some peripheral organ; or the central irritation may be so slight as not to exceed mere functional and nutritive changes, the existence of which is matter of inference but not of demonstration.

A well-known anatomical arrangement explains the mode in which mental effects are caused by extra-cerebral disease. This arrangement is the sympathetic system of nerves. The sympathetic system is the bond of union between the cerebro-spinal centres and the viscera. With its roots planted in the former, its branches reach out to the latter, catching every breath of change that stirs them even at their remotest confines, and reporting all to the encephalon. While, in one of its relations, the organ of personal[1] and more especially of emotional life, it is, in the other, the instrument that controls the circulation and nutrition of the brain, and in this way influences feeling, thought, and action.

The significance of this double relation, though apprehended in theory, is often overlooked in practice. A majority of investigators into the physical basis of disordered mental action, occupy themselves too exclusively with the brain; and pathologists who every day make the elementary distinction between centric and eccentric causes of nervous derangement, most unaccountably fail to base the pathology of mental disturbance on the same classification. However, the present indications are that before long a more comprensive view will be taken of the human person, into whose mental constitution enter not only the five intellectual senses, but all the multitudinous impressions of organic life, and some hitherto disregarded feelings of animal life as well. The result of this extension of knowledge is already apparent in the prominence given to material wants in every scheme devised for human well-being. In all the practical sciences, from the science of governing communities, to that of regulating the relations of human beings to each other, or to

[1] Ferrier, *Functions of the Brain*, New York, 1876.

their environment, the needs of the human body for sustenance, recreation, health, must henceforth stand in the foreground. All this may be gratuitous here; but there is just one result of the new doctrine which, since it falls within the scope of our immediate subject, may be indicated, viz., the general acknowledgement that many disorders of mind, such especially as are marked by perversions of feeling, have their origin more or less remote from the nervous centres, and are to be traced, not in the brain, though that is the place of their manifestation, but in the viscera connected with the functions of alimentation and reproduction.[1]

This much may be said without necessarily prejudging the mental quality of the suicide act, a point which will come up for consideration further on. Let us now pass to the question of sequence in the production of morbid mental phenomena.

The dependence of mental on bodily states is a fact familiar to all. Hunger makes a man cross; a substantial meal puts him in good humor. The general silence and constraint before a convivial dinner, and the flow of conversation at the festive board, are experiences the causes of which lie in purely organic conditions. The irritability of gout, and the mental hebetude which follows too much eating and drinking,[2] are further evidence of this dependence of mind on body.

[1] For evidence on this point see Storer, *Causes, Course, and Treatment of Reflex Insanity in Women*, Boston, 1871.

[2] "Mark, from a bewildering dinner how pale
Every man rises up! Nor is this all they ail,
For the body, weighed down by its last night's excesses,
To its own wretched level the mind, too, depresses,
And to earth chains that spark of the essence divine;
While he that 's content on plain viands to dine,
Sleeps off his fatigues without effort, then gay
As a lark rises up to the tasks of the day."
Horace, *Satires*, II, 2. Theodore Martin's Translation.

Loss of sleep and its consequent brain weariness are followed by defect of memory. Various extraneous substances introduced into the blood, more particularly alcohol, hashish, and opium, affect the character and sequence of ideas and sentiments. Alcohol stirs the benevolent or malevolent propensities according to temperament, stimulates emotion, and paralyzes self-control. Hashish causes a state of spiritual beatitude which, in many instances, beggars description.[1] The mental effects of opium are too familiar to need mention; and there are still other substances whose action, if not so certain, is equally striking when observed. One of these latter, in the personal experience of Dr. Laycock, is aconite. Dr. Carpenter says of him that "on a certain night, when a sufferer from severe pain and great weakness, he took one drop of Fleming's tincture of aconite and slept. About midnight he became sensible of a novel state of perception, obscure at first, but shaped at last into strains of grand aërial music in cadences of exquisite harmony, now dying away round mountains in infinite perspective, now pealing along ocean-like valleys. Knowing by previous studies that it was a hallucination of perception, he at last listened to ascertain the cause, and found it was the rattle of a midnight train entering an adjoining railway station. Thus, under the changes induced in the brain by a drop of tincture of aconite, the harsh rattle of the iron vibrating on the air, in the silence of a summer midnight, was changed into harp-like aërial music, such not only as 'ear had not heard,' but no conceivable art of man could realize."[2]

[1] Moreau, *Du Hachisch et de l' Alienation.* Paris, 1845.

[2] Laycock, *Mind and Brain,* quoted in Carpenter, *Mental Physiology.* N. Y., p. 643.

The influence of body on mind is so generally conceded that any attempt to insist on it would be quite superfluous. But, on the other hand, not a few contend that the many complemental instances of mind influencing body prove that consciousness may be immediately affected by a special class of causes,—causes of the moral order. There is no question as to the reality of these examples, but they do not quite justify the inference drawn from them. We have no knowledge of mental action pure and simple, nor of any mental state other than as associated with and as expressed by nerve action. So far as there are any means of judging, every manifestation of thought and feeling, from the crudest to the most subtle and spiritualized, follows upon this same action; and no cause acts upon mind—produces a manifestation of the quality named mental—except through the agency of this action.[1] Moral causes act upon the nerve centres first, inducing modifications of nutrition and circulation, and, through the medium of these modifications, produce their respective mental effects.

So much seemed necessary to indicate the fallacy that lurks in the current classification of causes influ-

[1] M. Moreau, in commenting on the purely mental effect of hashish, observes: "This is surely a very curious circumstance, and some remarkable inferences might be drawn from it; this, for instance, among others—that every feeling of joy and gladness, even when the cause of it is exclusively moral,—that those enjoyments which are least connected with material objects, the most spiritual, the most ideal,—may be nothing else than sensations purely physical, developed in the interior of the system, as are those procured by the hashish. At least, so far as relates to that of which we are internally conscious, there is no distinction between these two orders of sensations, in spite of the diversity in the causes to which they are due; for the hashish-eater is happy, not like the gourmand or the famished man when satisfying his appetite, or the voluptuary in gratifying his amative desires, but like him who hears tidings which fill him with joy, like the miser counting his treasures, the gambler who is successful at play, or the ambitious man who is intoxicated with success."—*Op. cit.*, p. 54, quoted in Carpenter, *Mental Physiology*, N. Y., p. 639.

encing mental acts into physical and moral. To a certain point, and in a restricted sense, this classification may be unobjectionable. The point hinted at is the human individual—where he comes in. The restriction would limit the use of the term moral causes to the sphere of action between man and man. Until the chain of sequences reaches the human person its links are links of physical and moral causes, not necessarily or even always arranged in regular sequence. But having reached the human person, they take a fixed order of succession; the physical cause (bodily change) invariably precedes the moral cause (mental change). In point of fact, the influences to which we are all subjected by the various agencies of our environment act on our physique first and afterward on our minds. Prosperous circumstances, comfortable surroundings, pleasant weather, good health, and the rest, create cheerfulness, intellectual activity, and muscular vigor. Poverty, privation, ill-health, a chilling north-east wind, produce effects of an opposite kind.

Keeping the preceding observations in mind, we may divide the personal causes of suicide into:

1. Bodily causes.
2. Mental causes.

Under the first are classed all the various organic diseases the connection of which with suicide has been noted from time to time by competent observers; and under the second, their mental effects, the immediate precursors of the act of self-destruction.

CHAPTER II.

Bodily Causes of Suicide.

BESIDES the local diseases to be noticed presently, there are some more general disorders which have a tendency to end in suicide. One of these is alcoholism, the effects of which are manifested in the blood, the nervous system, and the entire round of the nutritive processes. That common disturbance of the secretions termed "biliousness" is another of these temporary states, as is also the nerve-prostration caused by prolonged mental anxiety and its concomitants, loss of appetite and of ability to sleep. There are several historical suicides the causes of which, so far as known, are traceable to mental anxiety and overwork. Those of Hugh Miller, Sir Samuel Romilly, and Prevost-Paradol, will readily suggest themselves to the reader. One of the most celebrated of this class is the suicide of Lord Londonderry (better known as Lord Castlereagh), the particulars of which are given in the *Greville Memoirs* under dates August 13 and 19, 1822. I will take the liberty of transcribing such parts of this narrative as bear upon the point under consideration.

"It seems Lord Londonderry had been unwell for some time, but not seriously, and a few days before this catastrophe he became much worse, and was very

much dejected. He told Lord Granville some time ago that he was worn out with fatigue, and he told Count Münster the other day that he was very ill indeed. The Duke of Wellington saw him on Friday, and was so struck by the appearance of illness about him that he sent Bankhead to him. He was cupped on Saturday in London, got better, and went to Foot's Cray. On Sunday he was worse, and the state of dejection in which he appeared induced his attendants to take certain precautions, which, unfortunately, however, proved fruitless. They removed his pistols and his razors, but he got hold of a penknife which was in the room next his, and on Sunday night, or early on Monday morning, he cut his throat with it."

This is the entry under date August 13. Further on, under the 19th of the same month, he adds the following confirmatory evidence of the victim's state of ill health: "It seems," writes Mr. Greville, "that he gave several indications of a perturbed mind a short time previous to his death. For some time past he had been dejected, and his mind was haunted with various apprehensions, particularly with a notion that he was in great personal danger. On the day (the 3d of August) he gave a great dinner at Cray to his political friends, some of them finding the wine very good wished to compliment him upon it, and Arbuthnot called out, 'Lord Londonderry!' He instantly jumped up with great vivacity, and stood as if in expectation of something serious that was to follow. When he was told that it was about the wine they wished to speak to him, he sat down; but his manner was so extraordinary that Huskisson remarked it to Wilmot as they came home."

This narrative plainly suggests that Lord London-

derry, at the time of the scene it describes, was suffering from cerebral irritation, the mental expression of which was in his case, as it is in the generality of such cases where the tendency is to suicide, either a fixed idea, a hallucination, or a delusion. From the fact that a cupping gave him temporary relief, the legitimate inference is that this irritation was accompanied by local congestion.

A striking example of the ultimate tendency of nutritive disorders to cause suicide is afforded by the disease pellagra, so called from the rough skin, which is one of its prominent symptoms. This disease occurs chiefly among the peasantry of northern Italy, who eat bread made of sour maize, though it also exists in parts of Italy where such bread is not eaten. It is in all probability a consequence of bad hygienic influences generally, including, with sour maize, bad drinking water, bad ventilation, and the rest. One of the noted effects of pellagra is to cause insane melancholy, with a tendency to suicide by drowning. On referring to Appendix, F, it will be seen how largely pellagra enters into the Italian mortuary returns as a cause of suicide.

Researches into the causative relation between lesions of particular organs and the suicide impulse have not given a satisfactory result, though they have elicited some facts which may serve as a basis for further investigation. Gall thought that the crania of suicides were exceptionally heavy and dense; but the collection of crania in Esquirol's possession made this conclusion doubtful. Esquirol did not find any constant relation in the diameters of the skulls of suicides, some being long (dolicocephalic), while others are round (brachicephalic). Both Home and Esquirol noticed the vessels of the *dura mater* much dilated. Fréteaux reported two cases of suicide attribu-

table to cerebral congestion. Récamier found an ossification of the *dura mater* over the front of the left cerebral hemisphere of a man who had poisoned himself. Osseous concretions have been found in the cerebral ventricles of suicides, and Cabanis held that their nervous centres are exceptionally rich in phosphorus. At an autopsy on the body of a military man who died by his own hand, the brain was consistent, though pale; the transverse colon was almost perpendicular; the gall-bladder contained black and viscid bile. Displacements of the colon are frequent in lypemania according to Esquirol, who adds that biliary concretions are rare among suicides. Osiander thought that lesions of the heart and abdominal viscera are common causes of suicide. Esquirol failed to discover any peculiar lesion that could be assigned as a cause of suicide in any exclusive sense. Leuret (*Dict. de Médecine*, Art. *Suicide*) says that in seven autopsies of suicides nothing was discovered except such injuries as were incident to the modes of death, and that the lesions found in nine others were so varied that no important conclusion could be drawn from them.

Nevertheless, the results of some of Esquirol's examinations are both interesting and suggestive. An autopsy on a woman who committed suicide disclosed a hydatid cyst in the liver, but failed to discover any lesion in the brain. One on an onanist who hung himself, showed signs of catarrhal inflammation of the gastro-intestinal mucous membrane. And, to give one more instance, an autopsy on a melancholic who had starved himself to death, showed muco-enteritis of the transverse and upper part of the descending colon, while the remainder of the intestinal tract was sound,[1]

[1] Esquirol, *Malad. Mentales*, Paris, 1838, vol. i, p. 639, *et seq.*

In 1,210 autopsies on suicides made by Pinel, Esquirol, Falret, Fodéré, and others, the organs diseased were in relative frequency as follows:

Calvarium, meninges, and brain,	870	times.
Liver, stomach, and intestines,	230	"
Heart and lungs,	110	"[1]

These inquiries give important results. They show, first of all, the concurrence of bodily disease and suicide, and, secondly, the more frequent association of some particular classes of disease with this mode of death. But they are defective in that point wherein all autopsies made without previous knowledge of the subject in life usually fall short, and which is essential to their scientific value, namely, whether the observed sequences are veritable instances of cause and effect, or not. Apart, however, from this defect, the investigation itself presents some weighty facts relative to the pathology of suicide which may well claim attention. First of all there is the preponderance of diseases of the brain and its coverings[2]; then the large proportion of diseases of the organs of alimentation and secretion,—the stomach, intestines, and liver especially; and, finally, the comparative infrequency of diseases of the heart and lungs. All this accords with the result of inquiries on the pathology of abnormal mental states generally, in which organic disease usually occurs in the relation above stated. Though it is still doubtful in what proportion of cases of mental derangement the cerebral hemispheres are diseased, it is generally conceded that their diseases are first in order of frequency, and

[1] Winslow, *Anatomy of Suicide.*

[2] The vital statistics of France give a total of 14,909 suicides for the years 1869, 1871, and 1876, out of which there are 4,326 from diseases of the brain.

that the diseases affecting the organs of alimentation are next.

So much being said on the general aspect of this relation, instances may now be given to show the connection between particular diseases and suicide. Such further explanation as this connection may call for will be reserved until the next chapter, where an attempt will be made to indicate the psychological link which unites ill health with the impulse to self-destruction.

In the collection of 265 cases of suicide already referred to on more than one occasion, the previous state of personal health is noted in 119 instances, as follow: Epileptics, 5; insane at time of, or previous to, suicide, 21; desponding and sleepless, 30; mentally excited, 4; intemperate, 21: afflicted with general ill health, 15; with physical suffering, including neuralgia, 5; with delirium tremens, 5; with disease of the liver, 8; of the lungs, 2; the ear, 2; with rupture, 1. Total, 119.

It is highly probable that the suicide of each one of the above was the consequence of his or her peculiar bodily disease, though the evidence at hand does not positively establish this fact in more than 28 instances, a list of which is here given: Intoxication and delirium tremens, 19; neuralgia and other forms of physical suffering, 4; pulmonary consumption, 2; deafness and disease of the ear, 2; rupture, 1. Total, 28.

The most conspicuous and impressive fact in this list is the large number of suicides from abuse of stimulants. It is quite probable that were statistics on this point more reliable than they are, they would justify us in connecting a majority of suicides, among men at least, directly or indirectly, with this vice. One feature not unusual in the clinical histories of suicides from alcoholic

abuse, is that of a previous injury to the brain by sunstroke, violence, or some such cause, which injury, whatever its nature, is sooner or later followed by a tendency to drunkenness, and by a degree of cerebral irritability greatly disproportionate to the amount of liquor indulged in. Quite often there are other indications of disordered brain in these cases, such as irritability of temper, despondency, sleeplessness, and extreme nervous debility. The despondency so noticeable in them is not seldom associated with grave lesions of the cerebral blood-vessels, —endo-arteritis, thrombosis, and miliary aneurisms.

The small number of suicides among consumptives is not surprising in view of their habitual cheerfulness. Observers are well aware that, apart from a quite natural apprehension of their danger, the afflicted with pulmonary consumption are not depressed in spirits, unless they happen to labor at the same time under the stress of some abdominal ailment. "In tuberculosis of the lung," says Dr. J. Milner Fothergill, "there is commonly such an emotional attitude in the patient as has earned for itself the designation *Spes phthisica*. * * * The consumptive patient just dropping into the grave will indulge in plans stretching far into the future, ignoring his real condition, and the impossibility of any such survival as he is calculating upon."[1]

There are occasional exceptions, however, to the habitual cheerfulness of consumptives, even when the abdominal complications alluded to do not exist. One such exception happened in the spring of 1870, and led to an attempt at suicide. The subject had been consumptive for over a year, and was extremely emaciated. Of late he had been silent and low-spirited; and one day he

[1] *Mental Aspects of Ordinary Disease, Journal of Ment. Science.*

seized a razor, and inflicted a wound upon his throat, which though severe was not fatal. He lived for a month thereafter, never ceasing to repent of his deed.

The two suicides from pulmonary consumption in the preceding list were committed in full view of the fatal tendency of their ailment. One of the victims had learnt this tendency from his physician; the other had inferred it from what he himself knew of the nature of his malady. He showed his settled and deliberate purpose by declaring that he could not "go around the world a broken down, miserable, incurable mortal, spiritless, worthless, and hopeless." He conceded that many could stand more suffering than had fallen to his lot, but held it no fault of his that he was an exception to the common spirit of endurance. "Nature blundered," he said, "in fitting the wrong head to the wrong body."

The suicides from ear disease and deafness were equally persuaded of the incurability of their maladies. They left declarations that they deliberately sought death as the only release from their sufferings. The same may be said of the suicide from a rupture,—a German of sixty-nine summers, who, in the midst of evident suffering, wrote that "rather than linger in such agony he would prefer to say good-by to his friends and terminate his misery by a violent death."

The list also contains four suicides from "general ill health" and "physical suffering," in which death was sought from identical motives.

The preceding are but a few of the many special diseases associated with suicide. There is a large class of ailments connected with the development and decline of the reproductive function, which impel to the same end, through their effect upon the higher nerve centres.

Many suicides committed at the time of life when menstruation is beginning, or during the decline of this function, are caused by the nerve irritation which is often extreme at these periods. Sometimes the suicidal impulse is associated with uterine displacements, as Van der Kolk has shown by a striking example, and as will be illustrated in the sequel by another of equal interest.

These are the diseases most commonly associated with the suicide impulse. Considered by themselves they have little if any power to originate this impulse. In order to be able to do so they must be aided by peculiarities of individual temperament. The suicide alluded to above, who ended his days because he had a troublesome ear disease, declared the personal conditions of his act in words with a suggestive force which excuses their being twice quoted. "Nature has blundered in fitting the wrong head to the wrong body." Nature had not given this man the temperament, fortitude, patience, resignation—or whatever one may choose to call the requisite quality—enabling him to suffer the ills to which the majority of people resign themselves, and which, as he implied, he too might have borne had he been constituted like them. There is some, nay a great deal of truth in this statement. For, after all, temperament is but an expression of nervous organization. It is important, therefore, that in searching for the connecting link between bodily disease and the suicide impulse, we should seek if happily we may find it in the nervous system. And to this point we will now address ourselves.

The essential condition of a sound nervous system is healthful nutrition, a term which includes a sufficient supply of blood pabulum, duly appropriated by the tis-

sues, and a prompt removal of all waste material through the various emunctories. Each one of this series of operations depends in its turn on subsidiary functions; and the due execution of the whole gives orderly nutrition and health, while their failure ends in disease and irritation. Irritation, indeed, may for all practical purposes be set down as our antithesis of good health.

It is customary to look for the cause of this departure from health to one or other of three sources,—the blood, the nerve centres, or some remote organ whose influence is propagated through the sympathetic. The extent to which the departure is pushed will depend, generally speaking, on which of these agents is most in fault. If the disturbing cause be an excitement sent from some eccentric source, as a torpid liver, or a displaced womb, the effect may not amount to more than a perturbation of nerve molecules with consequent imperfect discharge of their functions. The anæmia sometimes accompanying this state of things is not so immediately a consequence of irritation as of the general defect in nutrition with which it is apt to be attended. It adds, however, to the therapeutic difficulties of such cases, for cell molecules in rapid vibration perish quickly, and their places need to be supplied with more dispatch than the impoverished state of the blood will allow. Fortunately we have in the *bromides* a means of keeping excess of irritability in check, and of controlling not only its molecular effects, but, to an extent, even such as are mental, until the quality of blood and general tone of system have been improved by other agents.

It is in the class of cases characterized by central irritation that changes of circulation in the nerve centres are induced, causing anæmia or hyperæmia according to the

degree of irritation or the peculiar character of the irritant. We have here to do with the controlling action of the sympathetic over local blood supply, or, more exactly, of the vaso-motor nerves, which are mixed sympathetic and cerebro-spinal. Moderate irritation of the sympathetic causes currents of greater intensity in the vaso-motor filaments, arterial contraction, diminished volume of blood, and increase in the speed of its flow. If at this point the irritation be discontinued, its consequences also cease, and the vital condition reverts to the *status quo ante irritationem.* But if, on the contrary, it be continued or increased, the results are paralysis, dilated, flaccid arteries, increased volume of blood, and slackening of its speed. Effects identical with these latter follow section of the sympathetic in the neck, and, I may perhaps venture to add, the presence of abnormal substances in the blood having special affinities for the nervous system,—opium, for example, as well as alcohol in immoderate quantities.

Special stress has been laid on irritation of the nerve centres throughout the foregoing remarks, for the very good reason that it is a feature common to all the various states of these centres on which the suicide impulse depends, whether its source be centric or eccentric, its accompaniment anæmia or hyperæmia. In concluding this attempt to elucidate the neuro-pathology of suicide, it may be useful to narrate a few of the examples of nervous irritation, attended with the suicidal impulse, that have lately come under my own observation and treatment.

The first to be narrated is an example of central nervous irritation attended with hyperæmia and caused by alcoholic excess.

1. H. M., a young man of small stature, light build, pale face, restless eye, rigid facial muscles, and other indications of a nervous system in a state of high tension. He was subject to attacks of hæmaturia occurring at irregular intervals, and accompanied by fits of gloom, which sometimes terminated in a debauch. On one of these occasions, when passing through an attack of *delirium tremens*, and while his brain was in a state of extreme congestion, he rose from his bed in the night, during the temporary absence of his nurse, and escaped out of the house. As soon as his flight was discovered anxious search was made for him everywhere about the premises, but without success; and the seekers were well-nigh discouraged, when the truant opened the hall-door, which, with a half intention to return, he had left ajar on going out, and stole in. The inquiries addressed to him elicited the following narrative: As he lay in bed he had a fixed idea that his friends and attendants were conspiring together to poison him, and were already accomplishing their fell purpose by introducing venomous substances into his food and medicine. He felt that every thing given him was administered for the sole purpose of hurrying on his dreadful end. Unable any longer to support such torture, he resolved to commit suicide, and, with this determination uppermost in his mind, he fled away to drown himself in the Hudson. But, scarce had he gone half-way when his attention was arrested by a familiar voice speaking in his ear, and stopping to listen more attentively, he distinctly heard me say: "Go back, you fool! Go back!" Whereupon, without a moment's hesitation—with the ready response of the hypnotized subject—he turned and fled home.

The case next in order was an instance of cerebro-spinal irritation, associated with anæmia.

The patient is a married lady, and the mother of several children. About a month after her last confinement she grew weak and despondent. When describing her feelings she reminded me that her domestic life was happy, and stated further that she knew of absolutely no reason why she should be afflicted with the gloom and the weariness of life which overshadowed her, and which at times almost drove her to take her own life. After ceasing to suckle her child, she was soon restored to better health of mind and body by suitable treatment. But even yet at times, when, from some digestive derangement or anxiety, her nervous tone is lowered, she has premonitions of a return to the same state of despondency, with suicide impulses.

The last case to be given is, perhaps, the most definite and instructive of the group.

A married lady, twenty-six years of age, consulted me in reference to a train of nervous symptoms which were at times accompanied, and with increasing frequency of late, by an impulse to suicide. She began the interview by saying that as her entire ailment was, in her opinion, mental and impalpable, she had no expectation of being benefited by medical treatment; but that she had come to me because she knew that I would understand her better than her friends, who irritated rather than consoled her by saying that it was all imaginary. Proceeding in her narrative, she said that two months after her first confinement, her child having expired soon after its birth, and her milk disappearing in the usual course, she began to experience feelings of a distressing though not acutely painful kind in the regions of the womb and stomach, as well as in the spine and back of the head. Sometimes a sensation, as if an *aura*, would

start from the pelvis and travel quickly along the spine to the head, when she would be seized with vertigo, confusion of ideas, or absolute loss of memory, and a momentary tension of the entire voluntary muscular system. At intervals of between three and four weeks, for several subsequent months, she had identical symptoms, but she still refused to give them sufficient attention until at length she had an experience which fairly alarmed her. She was sitting alone in her room sewing, one afternoon, suffering in health and any thing but cheerful in mind, when all of a sudden, and most unaccountably as she declared, the impulse to commit suicide seized her with great violence. After wrestling with it for some time it passed off, leaving her in a puzzled and intensely unhappy frame of mind. But soon afterward it returned again, with even greater force, on occasion of the suicide of a woman in the neighborhood. For a long time after this occurrence she seemed to be led on to self-destruction by a terrible fascination, which she could only control by resolutely fixing her whole energies upon some pursuit foreign to her morbid train of feeling. Her symptoms having suggested to me the probability of a uterine origin for her physical and mental condition, I made the necessary examination and detected a downward displacement of her womb with anteversion, and erosion of its mouth. After local treatment, a suitable pessary was introduced and worn for two months, during the whole of which time the disagreeable pelvic sensations were absent, the suicidal impulse did not return, and she experienced a cheerfulness of mind to which she had been a stranger for a long time. At the end of this period I removed it, intending to leave it out for a few days; but before the time fixed for its replacement, she returned complaining

that her nervous feelings were beginning anew, and that she was again experiencing the same state of mind which on previous occasions had accompanied her propensity to suicide. I at once replaced the pessary, after which her physical and mental condition again rapidly improved; and, though she has since passed through a severe illness, her distressing symptoms and alarming propensity have not returned.

Irritation of the nerve centres is, therefore, the essential physical cause of suicide; but to originate the suicide impulse, it requires to be supplemented by a peculiar state of mind. The nature of this mental state, and its relation to the suicide act, will be discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER III.

Mental Causes of Suicide—Temperament.

THE progress of our studies brings us now to the mental causes of suicide. But before entering on this theme we shall devote a short space to some general considerations of a psychological character, which are requisite to its full and intelligent comprehension.

On a basis to be mentioned presently, we may divide mankind into two classes, one characterized by predominance of the *affective* or *subjective* aspect of mind, the other by predominance of its *effective* or *objective* aspect. Mr. Lewes describes these classes tersely in his *Life of Goethe*: "Frederick Schlegel," he writes, "(and after him Coleridge) aptly indicated a distinction when he said that every man was born either a Platonist or an Aristotelian. This distinction is often expressed in the terms *subjective* and *objective*. The tendency of the objective intellect is to view things directly, positively—as what they are; the tendency of the subjective intellect is to view things ideally—as what they signify to the mind."

The expressions Platonist and Aristotelian, as here applied, have reference to the intellectual doctrines of Plato and Aristotle, and to the natural tendency of minds to range themselves on the side of one or the other, ac-

cording to their predilections. On the question of the origin of knowledge, for instance, one mind is experientialist, while another is intuitionalist; with regard to the proper method of philosophizing, one proceeds on the basis of the syllogism, the other on the basis of induction. But the present inquiry needs a classification founded on more than the intellectual attitude toward doctrine, and wide enough to comprise the essential facts of personal life. While retaining, therefore, the words objective and subjective to mark a natural distinction between orders of men, it will be necessary to give this distinction a broader meaning by founding it on temperament, which comprehends the entire human person, moral, intellectual, and physical.

Starting, then, with temperament as our basis of classification, we may observe in the first place that it is a compound. To discover its component parts we must dismember it; to know its laws of combination and action we have to reconstruct it. The former is the method by analysis, the latter the method by synthesis. Our object being the quest of what makes the difference between the temperaments, we shall follow mainly the method by analysis.

The first step in the analysis of temperament is to disclose its double aspect, one physical, the other mental. The physical aspect has many features, a full enumeration of which will be unnecessary here. Let it suffice to say that special prominence is to be given to digestion, secretion, assimilation, and, above all, innervation. There is a healthy standard of these functions represented by individuals of sound constitution; and, on the other hand, a state of function which, without being in strict accuracy diseased, is yet not healthy; which, in a word,

oscillates between health and disease. The next step is to state the essential facts proper to each one of these standards of functional activity, in doing which we shall be enumerating the respective *physical* qualities of the objective and subjective temperaments.

Roughly speaking, the physical qualities of the objective temperament are freedom from inherited defect, normal excitability of the nervous centres, absence of disease of these centres, and of disease or derangement of the abdominal organs. To these may be added a good appetite, vigorous digestion, healthy secretion, free excretion, and a faculty for sleeping. The possessor of these qualities takes a hopeful view of life. He is equal to its emergencies, as well as its every-day duties. He calmly measures the forces opposed to him, and puts forth well-regulated energy to cope with them. "There is in the material construction of some persons, much more than of others," says Foster in a well-known essay, "some quality which augments, if it do not create, both the stability of their resolution and the energy of their active tendencies. There is something that * * * braces round * * * and compresses the powers of the mind, giving them a steady forcible spring and reaction, which they would presently lose if they could be transferred into a constitution of soft, yielding, treacherous debility. * * * Accordingly, I believe it will be found, that a majority of the persons most remarkable for decisive character have possessed great constitutional physical firmness * * * a tone of vigor the opposite to lassitude, and adapted to great exertion and endurance."[1]

The subjective temperament has physical qualities of

[1] *Essay on Decision of Character*, in Collected Essays. London, 1873.

an opposite nature, chief among which are abnormal excitability of nerves and nerve centres, not seldom ending in actual disease, and one or more of the various impediments to healthy nutrition,—impaired digestion, defective secretion, retarded excretion, and, may be, some distal source of cerebro-spinal irritation. From one or more of these states follow physical pain, or at least *malaise*, and mental gloom. People in whom they exist cannot always cope with situations of even moderate difficulty. Their failures, too, serve but to increase the natural and even pronounced tendency of their minds to despondency.

But the essential difference between the temperaments lies in their respective degrees of nervous excitability.[1] With the subjective temperament, nerve reaction is quick, spasmodic, and diffused; with the objective, it is deliberate, orderly, and limited. Nerve force is doled out in the latter according to the amount of energy demanded; it rushes out in the former in haste and disorder, the discharge proving too sudden to be controlled by the higher nerve centres, and the general result being excess of emotion and of excito-motor activity. Moreover, the nervous instability of the subjective temperament is such that nerve force is apt to be discharged whenever its quantity exceeds the minimum of accumulation. In one of his lectures on the nervous system Dr. Brown-Séquard has alluded to this difference between the temperaments.

[1] Mr. James Sully treats of the influence of temperament on happiness in ch. xiv of his book on *Pessimism* (London, 1877). He contrasts the emotional (subjective) with the unemotional (objective) temperament, and thinks the difference between them depends on "dissimilarity in the nervous system." He cites Prof. Henle, the anatomist of Göttingen, who, in an essay on temperaments lately published, argues to the same effect, viz.: that the difference in question is due to presence or absence of "a certain *tonus* in the sensory nerves." In a note, he says that Prof. Henle thinks the peculiar characteristic of the melancholic temperament is "deep and persistent feeling generally," shown by excess of emotion over will.

"Persons who are extremely strong," he observes, "will not generally be moved by excitation. They will of course appreciate the excitation; they will judge what it is; but they will remain calm under it. While, on the contrary, persons whose nervous system is weak, and who have little nerve force, will react under any excitation, however slight, without giving to the mind time to think of what the excitation is." [1]

To sum up. The physical qualities of the objective temperament belong to health, while those of the subjective temperament, falling short of health, tend toward disease.

So much, briefly, for the physical side of temperament. Let us now view it on its mental side.

Still pursuing the method of analysis, we shall divide mind into emotion, volition, and reason, this division sufficing for the study of temperament. It is obvious that these three qualities are not separately distributed to separate individuals; that is, we do not find one class of men all emotion, a second all will, a third all reason. Quite the contrary; they are mingled in every man, though not in definite proportions. Of their law of admixture, if there be any such, we are quite ignorant. But, setting aside all doubtful and obscure points, the one fact remains that there are differences among men in respect of temperament, owing to unequal admixtures of the above-mentioned qualities.

Be it noted, however, that there is a limit to these differences. Though men vary indefinitely as regards the ingredients of their mental constitution, they naturally fall into two great classes, respectively named objective and subjective.

[1] *Six Lectures, New York Tribune Extra*, No. 15.

What are the mental characteristics distinctive of each class?

Before answering this question it will be advisable to get some general notions by the aid of an illustration or two. We shall therefore proceed to contrast the poets Crabbe and Chatterton, who shall stand for examples, the former of the objective, the latter of the subjective temperament.

Happily for George Crabbe, poet and minister of the Gospel, he belonged to a class of matter-of-fact men, whose shoulders are fitted to carry the burdens of every-day life. Until his twenty-fifth year he fought bravely, on the whole, against the obstacles to his success, though twice during that time he wellnigh succumbed in the struggle. His first wavering was on the occasion of the failure of the publisher who was to have brought out his poem, *The Candidate*. This incident so grievously disappointed his hopes, at a time, too, when his pecuniary resources were almost at their lowest ebb, that, as he said afterward when alluding to Chatterton's death, the thought of suicide occurred to him. A second time when, hungry and in debt, he was awaiting the result of his appeal to Edmund Burke for aid, he passed the night walking up and down Westminster Bridge in alternate hope and despair. Notwithstanding, we may easily conceive that his despondency on these occasions was rather the passing shadow of a great anxiety than the true expression of his temperament; for, amid nearly all his struggles for bread and fame, he bore his lot patiently, hopefully, comforting himself often with religious sentiments. His real temperament showed itself in a still more striking light as he became successful in later life. He appears to us then discharging the duties of his clerical office undis-

turbed by an exaggerated sense of its responsibilities; duly subordinating the self-regarding elements of his nature, and directing his sympathies toward healthy, practical ends. He took little interest in purely speculative questions, whether religious or philosophical, ordinary pursuits and the routine duties of his sacred calling sufficing for his needs. Nor as a poet did he give a loose rein to imagination. Living in a country parish, he took the characters and incidents of his poetry from the rustic life about him, and the fidelity to nature of his writings attests at once his keen observation, sound sense, and healthy sympathies. It is but natural that one possessed of so equable a temperament should succeed in the serious game of life; and, in point of fact, Crabbe, though poor and friendless in his youth, achieved a substantial though modest competence at middle age, partly through good fortune, it must be said, but mainly by the exercise of patience and perseverance. Not that he was exempt from suffering. His days from the time he left his father's roof until Edmund Burke was instrumental in snatching him from the brink of ruin, were one long combat against adverse fortune, a combat which one of an opposite temperament would barely have survived.

In contrast with Crabbe place Chatterton, who killed himself in his seventeenth year. In his childhood sensitive, emotional, and melancholy, he used many a time to sit alone by the hour, weeping for no reason that his family could divine. This mood so grew upon him that his relatives, in despair of his reason, dubbed him a little idiot. And it continued with him until his seventh year, when he experienced a sudden and impressive change. From the sensitive, melancholy lad that he was, borne down by a weight of indefinable sadness, he bounded

into a realm of absolute romance. While still fundamentally the same, his purely emotional life was transformed into a life in which the threads of emotion and intellect were pretty equally interwoven. The immediate cause of this change—how it was induced by a sight of the illuminated manuscripts in the muniment-room of the old church of St. Mary Redcliffe—need not be rehearsed.[1] Suffice it to say that he thenceforth lived in a world of his own creation,—a world of bold knights and stately dames, of ghostly friars and cowled monks, of frowning castle and holy cloister,—a world in which the men were all brave and the women all pure. Immersed thus in an imaginary sphere, every individual character of which was the impersonation of some ideal virtue, it cannot surprise us that he should have so little fortified himself against what came to him in the harsh after-experiences of his life. In truth, considering the intensely subjective character of his temperament and the highly imaginative quality of his intellect, the trained observer of the present day would have no difficulty in forecasting the fatal consequence of that inevitable clash between his ideal world and the world of reality, which, when it came, changed him from a romantic, trustful boy, into a premature man, embittered against his kind and despairing of his future.

Here, then, are two persons of the same order of genius, contending against like odds in the exterior world, suffering equal hardships and disappointments; yet the one leads a life of tranquil enjoyment, while the other, after a short and feverish life, dies by his own hand. Wherein lies the difference? Can it be told why Chat-

[1] The narrative is given in Prof. Daniel Wilson's appreciative biography of the poet. London, 1870.

terton, and men like him, are unequal to the battle of life? Yes; the accident of temperament is the essential reason. Let us, then, consider the mental and moral features peculiar to the objective and subjective temperaments respectively.

Mind may be viewed as substance endowed with possibilities of feeling, thought, and volition. Feeling comprises sensation—its physical aspect, and emotion—its mental aspect. Volition includes both will and action; while thought connotes the intellectual faculties, memory, imagination, and judgment. We shall not speculate as to whether each of these functions of mind has its separate and distinct region in the brain, though it may be remarked in passing that the tendency of modern inquiry is to specialization in this regard. The point material to our inquiry is this, that while emotional susceptibility is deficient or naturally subordinate in the objective temperament, it is in excess and naturally insubordinate in the subjective temperament, in which latter, moreover, its tendency is to dominate over thought and action.

It were impossible to analyze the temperaments on their mental side without frequent reference to their bodily conditions. But as this latter point has already occupied its share of our attention, it is enough to observe now, that emotional susceptibility is closely linked to the organic feelings at one pole, and to the molecular state of the nerve centres at the other, rising or falling in direct proportion to the irritability of the latter or the intensity of the former.

To this close relation in the organism, there corresponds an equally close one in the realm of mental life. As on the physical side, emotion is excited by states of

the organic feelings and nerve centres, so on the mental side it is all but exclusively occupied with the results of these physical changes,—present states of consciousness. Two results of practical moment follow. One is a habit of microscopic self-scrutiny, under the eye of which the natural feelings are magnified and judged by an exaggerated standard; every thought, word, and deed assuming the proportions of a crime, until the spirit is crushed by an overwhelming sense of its own unworthiness. The other is a hypersensitiveness to the behavior and remarks of outsiders, or even an entirely erroneous belief as to their sentiments and feelings. These are the consequences, and from them results one consequence still more momentous, namely, a paralysis of will power so complete that the self-torturer sinks from sheer inability to face the difficulties of his situation, trivial and even wholly fanciful though these often are.

It would be too much to say that these consequences of the subjective temperament are met with, in the particular form here alluded to, among all persons who belong to the class now under consideration. In different individuals, and according to the moral life and experiences of each one, sentiment and emotion have a special content and color. But that they really do present themselves in such a form, is shown by the recorded experience of the poet William Cowper, and would no doubt be seen, if looked for, in the experiences of a multitude of men and women with temperaments more or less akin to his.

Cowper's sensitive and retiring disposition was nourished by a life of strict seclusion. Shunning for the most part the society of his fellows, he secretly indulged his propensity for self-scrutiny. The record he has left of

his thoughts and feelings all through the time of this indulgence, shows how unsparingly he passed judgment on himself. Wishing, for instance, to confess that he fibbed in his boyhood, as children are wont to do, he puts it that he became proficient in "the infernal art of lying." And when he means to tell of his child-like ignorance respecting great moral and theological truths, he describes himself as having neither "sentiment of contrition nor thoughts of God or eternity." The habit of prying into the sick chambers of his mind, revealed in this and similar passages of his autobiography, issued finally in paralysis of his active powers, and caused him to sink so utterly under difficulties which were trivial enough of their kind, that sooner than face them he chose to make an attempt upon his life. This attempt, which, but for the merest accident, would have resulted in his suicide, was brought about in the following way.

Weary of indolence, and desiring employment, he had secured, through an influential kinsman, the position of Clerk of the Journals of the House of Lords, made vacant by the death of its incumbent. Although two other and more important offices—those of Reading Clerk and Clerk of the Committee—were open to him at the same time, he declined them, such was his extreme and morbid sensitiveness, because they necessitated his frequent appearance in public. It was this very sensitiveness that ultimately led to his attempt at suicide. He no sooner learned the impossibility of entering upon the duties of his chosen office without appearing at the Bar of the House, than he was seized with all his accustomed dread of such a situation. In this plight, fearing to appear lest he might break down or show his fancied incompetency, yet unwilling to withdraw and so offend his pa-

tron, he saw no hope of a release save by self-destruction, which, most fortunately, he did not accomplish. His entire attitude in this dread situation is a forcible commentary on the evil of morbid subjectivism,—the tension of mind that paralyzes will.[1]

The objective mind has no cause to be disturbed either by the state of the nerve centres or of the organic feelings. Free from impediments of the flesh, so to speak, linked to a sound constitution, and unswayed by emotion, it views things "directly, positively—as they are," and judges them coolly on their merits. It has a distant, impersonal way of regarding events as though they interested the cognitive faculty alone. Its salient features are superior powers of discrimination, leading to precise, independent thought and straightforward assertion,—all backed by qualities denoting the inductive or scientific order of intellect. Objects are presented to the mind of one of this temperament "with an exceedingly distinct and perspicuous aspect; * * * he sees the different parts of the subject in an arranged order, not in unconnected fragments; * * * in each deliberation the main object keeps its clear preëminence; * * * his judgment does not vary in servility to the moods of his feeling."[2] The personal bearing of this temperament is marked by cool self-possession, joined to self-reliance and self-complacency. The subjective man may acquire the two former qualities, but never the last.

To sum up. The most striking feature in the objective temperament is its impersonal, positive, and intellectual

[1] Literature affords some notable examples of this moral paralysis. Shakespeare gives the greatest of them all in *Hamlet*. With Hamlet the reader may contrast Hermann, in Goethe's *Hermann and Dorothea*, an admirable type of the objective temperament.

[2] Foster, *loc. cit.*

element. The no less conspicuous and striking feature in the subjective temperament is its personal, imaginative, and emotional element.

It goes without saying, that the subjective temperament is the more easily acted upon either by pleasing or painful impressions. In some conditions of the body, especially those that are marked by depressed functional activity, it has a minimum of susceptibility to pleasurable and a maximum of susceptibility to painful excitants. It is in its moods of conjoined physical and moral depression, that suicide impulses are prone to arise under the influence of some of the special causes examined in previous chapters. Practical men, who deal with facts apart from deep feeling or sentiment, rarely commit suicide. It is most commonly the act of dreaming, aimless, speculative men, with unbounded aspirations for the unattainable, whose personal feelings, giving ideal aspects to facts, place them in antagonism to real life.

In order to contrast the different behaviors of these two temperaments under similar trials, we have only to choose some one out of the many tests which experience daily supplies, and attend to its personal effect. Take, as an instance, reproof simultaneously administered to two persons of opposite temperaments. If just, it would either be disregarded by the objective man, or it would stimulate him to make efforts at reform. If unjust, it would not affect him at all, or, at most, only to the extent of causing him to show the error of his reprover. On a subjective man its effect would be entirely different. It would excite in him an emotion,—wounded self-love if innocent, remorse if guilty, one or other of which feelings, darkening his reason so as to preclude a fair view of the circumstances of the case, would deprive him of the

power of right judgment and action. An example or two will disclose the connection between suicide and this attitude of the subjective mind.

A woman of middle age poisoned herself in a fit of wounded self-love at having been upbraided by her husband for administering her charities unworthily.

A man in his sixty-seventh year blew his brains out because he was rebuked by his employer.

The excess of emotional sensibility so apparent in these examples, is not seldom found associated with disease. Instances of this association are afforded by persons laboring under morbid states of brain and the nerve degeneracies incident to advancing age. The following are two examples, among many of the same kind, showing the intimate relation between disease or injury of the brain and the morbid self-consciousness that tends to suicide.

A justice of the peace, while recovering from the effects of a sunstroke, was unmercifully attacked by a newspaper for his drinking habits; whereupon he was so mortified that he shot himself.

A well-known professor of military engineering, having been retired from his chair in consequence of old age and failure of intellect, brooded over his dismissal, torturing it into a thousand shapes of personal indignity and insult; and many times expressing his disgust at life, he at last jumped from a ferry-boat into the Hudson River and was drowned.

A comparison of percentages of suicides to population among civilized nations, would strengthen our theory by showing that those races with whom the subjective temperament predominates have the highest rates of self-inflicted deaths. The Germans, the Scandinavians, and the French are examples in proof of this position. They are

among the most subjective of peoples,—proud, sensitive, and impatient,—and their respective proportions of suicides to population average comparatively high. The difference between the respective rates of suicides in Germany and France is explainable in the same way; for the German is more subjective than the Frenchman,—more grave, moody, and preoccupied; more given to worry and brooding; more earnestly and conscientiously skeptical in religion and philosophy, when skeptical at all.[1]

That these differences in temperament not only exist, but have the effect here ascribed to them, is shown by careful observations made in the unexpected quarter of savage life. The Batang Lupars, a tribe of the Sea Dayaks, "feel acutely the loss of their children, and wander about inconsolable, and mope, and often refuse to work for months. They do not bear misfortune well; even the loss of houses by fire, or their crops from bad seasons, disheartens them to an extent that is surprising to those who have watched the conduct of the Seribas Dayaks. The piratical pursuits in which these latter delighted have certainly given great energy to their character; and they recover immediately from the effects of the destruction of their villages and of their property, and set to work to create more wealth."[2] In view of so marked a difference in temperament, it is not at all surprising to learn that suicides are of frequent occurrence among the Batang Lupars.

[1] "I am indebted to Dr. Waldstein, who has recently come from Germany, and who has made a special study of German pessimism in its social aspects, for the observation that whereas the disappointed German, with his strong idealism and his deep feeling, gravitates to an earnest pessimism, the disappointed Frenchman more commonly lapses into the lighter mood of cynical indifference."—Sully, *Pessimism*, p. 43, foot-note.

[2] St. John, *The Far East*, vol. i, p. 48.

We come now to the immediate cause of suicide, the link that joins the causes already mentioned to the suicide act. It has been shown that nervous, and especially cerebro-spinal irritation, is the immediate *physical* cause of suicide. It remains to be seen that a *fixed idea*, the mental analogue of the physical irritation described, is the immediate *mental* cause of suicide. But first of all, let us get a notion of the great personal influence of a *fixed idea*, irrespective of its special relation to the act of self-destruction. I will cite for this purpose an illustration, for the truth of which I can all the more confidently vouch since it happened in my own experience. During the progress of an earnest discussion on hydrophobia in the city of New York, now some five or six years ago, a gentleman of good judgment and usually great self-possession, took up a medical book to inform himself on the matter in dispute. It was Aitkin's *Practice of Medicine*, and he read on until he came to the last word in the following extract:

"Hydrophobia originates in animals of the canine and feline races, the fox—"

Here it suddenly occurred to him that, when a boy, he had been bitten on the hand by a fox. The recollection of this long-forgotten incident filled him with dismay. "Never before," he declares, "had I felt such sensations. I was conscious of two impressions, but for the moment of nothing besides. One of these was in my head, and took the shape of a fixed horror of hydrophobia. The other felt like a current of alternately cold and hot air rushing up my spine and out into my limbs. Instantly it seemed that every muscle in my whole body grew rigid, and the bare idea of swallowing water produced a spasm in my throat. Terror, actual terror, mounted

within me to such a pitch that I must have cried aloud had I not instantly rushed out-of-doors. In the open air, and by dint of compelling my thoughts into other channels, I succeeded in breaking the spell. My fixed idea faded into the background. My muscles relaxed. I trembled and was bathed in sweat." The feelings here described were renewed for some length of time after this whenever hydrophobia was alluded to in conversation; but each time they came fainter and fainter, until they finally ceased altogether. Such is the power of a fixed idea, which, when it has once reached its maximum of intensity, presses all faculties into its service, and keeps them so until it ends.

Viewing the fixed idea in its special relation to suicide, it is seen to have at least three notes or elements, namely, persistency, fear, and despair. The first of these gives it power to detain the entire mind,[1] to interpret every sensation, color every thought, and influence every action; the second causes the sentiment of personal misery; and the last shuts out hope of a future less dark. Of all these elements the nearest to the act of suicide is despair. It is, in some measure of intensity, its invariable precursor. Chatterton's suicide was in despair of overcoming obstacles to the fruition of his dreams; Hugh Miller's was in despair of reconciling the data and conclusions of geology with Scripture cosmogony; Prévôst Paradol killed himself in despair of his country's future; Cowper attempted his life because he had lost all hope of extricating himself from a dilemma of his own creation; and every day there are suicides from despair of outliving

[1] Mr. Bain, in his remarks on feeling in general (*Mental Science*, Amer. ed., p. 200), calls attention to the difference in this respect between painful *sensations* and painful *ideas*. The former may be got rid of by repelling their causes. Not so the latter, every attempt to banish which "often increases the mental excitement," and consequently their permanence.

physical suffering, shame, remorse, poverty, or any other of the too numerous ills that afflict mankind.

While reading in the biographies of famous men, one is not a little surprised to learn the numbers of these who at one or more eventful periods of their lives have touched the nadir of despair, and harbored serious thoughts of suicide Such instances are especially numerous in the ranks of painters, poets, and musicians, all of whom share more or less liberally in the subjective temperament.[1] Not every subject of this feeling commits suicide, however; thanks to the ray of hope that shines for most people through the longest night of woe.

The despair that drags down to the contemplation of suicide, but which a whispering hope suffers to drag no further, is illustrated in the life of the great Beethoven. His affliction was deafness, perhaps the sorest of all trials that could possibly befall one of such eminence in his art. It had been creeping on him for years with a plague of buzzing and singing in his ears by day and night, until at length he could barely hear his favorite sounds by putting his ear close to the orchestra. In his will, made about this time,[2] a glimpse is caught of his despondency; but at the same time we learn the nature of the force by which it was conquered. "Alas," he exclaims, "how could I proclaim aloud the deficiency of a sense which ought to have been more perfect with me than with other men,—a sense which I once possessed in the highest perfection, to an extent indeed that few of my profession ever enjoyed! * * * Such things brought

[1] Mr. Bain says (*Study of Character*, London, 1861, p. 218, note), "Poets and romancists are compounded of emotion and intellectual force." The impatience of men of literary genius has passed into a proverb:—

> 'There was never yet philosopher
> That could endure the toothache patiently,"

[2] Dated 1802.

me to the verge of desperation, and wellnigh made me put an end to my life. Art! art alone deterred me. Ah! how could I quit the world before bringing forth all that I felt it was my vocation to produce!"[1] Beethoven was as complete an embodiment of the subjective temperament as can be easily imagined. His health was poor. He was afflicted with indigestion and other more serious ailments, and his mental depression grew with his increasing deafness. He was sensitive and emotional to an extreme, quick to take offense, and discerning insult in every ill-considered act. He constantly magnified the petty vexations of life, and was either joyous or despondING,—lifted at times to the zenith of delight, to sink again and again into an abyss of despair. That one of his temperament should have contemplated suicide without committing it, shows nothing so much as the saving power of an ideal of duty.[2]

The intellectual attitude of men who have the intense subjectivism of Beethoven is not seldom one of rebellion against the customs and beliefs of society. Endowed with a large share of individuality, in the shape generally of love of personal freedom, and lacking the self-complacency that makes objective men satisfied with the world, they kick against restraint and contemn the common-sense philosophy of their kind. Hence they are passionate lovers of nature and haters of men. Hence also their tendency, speaking generally, to deify nature

[1] *Beethoven's Letters*, translated by Lady Wallace, London, 1866, p. 49.

[2] The essential moral characteristic of genius is patience and persistent endurance. Dante, Tasso, Milton, and a host of other great lights of the world, had their sore trials. But they lived through them because they had within themselves the necessary hope and strength. "God had not given them genius, as a light perfume escapes from a vial when it is shaken, but as a generous *viaticum* which sustains man during a long voyage." Girardin, *Lectures on Dramatic Literature*, Part i, p. 93.

and deny the God of Hebrew and Christian theology. Or, at least, if not all Pantheists, if many among them believe in a personal Deity, they scout the anthropomorphic shape in which he is popularly dressed. George Macdonald gives a portrait of the intellectual attitude of one such rebel in the friend of the hero of his novel, *Wilfred Cumbermede*. A youth of strong impulses, introspective and analytical in mind, pure in morals, just in bearing, straightforward in manner, feels his entire nature revolt against the hard conventionalism in which he was reared. Following the habit of subjective minds, he never wearies of opposing his own instinctive feelings of right to the tone of society and the actual course of events, and, in sore perplexity at the hopelessness of the struggle, dies by his own hand. Other men, of whom Chatterton may be considered a type, begin life with implicit trust in human nature; but finding their fond delusions vanish at every fresh experience, they rebound to the opposite extreme of mocking skepticism and are made unbelievers by a sort of moral compulsion. Still others, like Hugh Miller, having had their faith shaken by the conclusions of science, fall into despair because of the intellectual uncertainty of all faith, and take their own lives. But whatever may have been the cause and history of their despair, and however reprehensible their mode of death, it would be an injustice to those men, not to mention the millions who share in their temperament, did we fail to see in them many of the elements that go to form a superior type of moral and religious excellence.

In concluding this chapter, it will be well to recapitulate the points of the foregoing discussion.

1. Viewed from the side of *Temperament*, mankind are divisible into two classes, Objective and Subjective.

2. Each class has its distinctive physical and mental traits.

3. Of the two classes, the subjective is the more sensitive to painful and pleasurable feelings. But the former of these preponderating in consequence of the nature of the temperament itself, the result is a tendency to melancholy, which, under the conditions already explained, may end in suicide.

4. A fixed idea is the immediate mental cause of suicide. It has three elements, *viz.*: persistency, fear, and despair. Of these the last is the final mental state of the suicide. There are examples of despair short of suicide, the desponding mood having been checked by a powerful corrective, such as devotion to some ideal or practical aim.

CHAPTER IV.

Relation of Suicide to Insanity.

THE impression prevails, though not to its former extent, that suicide is, *per se*, proof of insanity: or, in other words, that whoever kills himself must necessarily be insane, at least at the moment of taking his life. This impression is of modern origin: for though it is true that suicide in ancient literature, as depicted in the tragedies of Sophocles, for instance, is always the result of some emotion roused to a pitch of great intensity, it was regarded in this exclusive light neither by Roman imperial law, nor by pagan philosophy. Both the one and the other assumed that every person had a natural right to kill himself if he chose: and, of course, a natural right must be grounded in sanity. It is true that Roman law, and perhaps pagan philosophy also, for aught we know to the contrary, made a distinction between suicide committed under the influence of madness or fury on the one hand, and of various other causes on the other: but, at least so far as law is concerned, this distinction was for the mere purpose of separating into a distinct category that quality of suicide which involved imperial rights, and of thereby distinguishing it from other suicides which did not involve these rights. Roman law did not attempt a classification of suicides into sane and insane,

nor did it make the question of insanity a material part of its legislation respecting suicide. The first hint of any such classification occurs in the Penitential of Theodore, Archbishop of Canterbury, where moral guilt is roughly apportioned to the degree of sanity possessed by individuals at the time of their suicide. The tenderness here exhibited toward insane suicides grew in the Church and in civil society, while at the same time the severity shown toward sane suicides waxed greater and greater, until, at the approach of the French Revolution, it was so extreme as to call for indignant protests from leading reformers of the day. These protests, aided by the more humane tone that began to pervade society at the close of the Napoleonic wars, blotted the laws against those guilty of *felo-de-se* from the statute books of western Europe and Great Britain, and spread a general belief in the necessary insanity of every person who commits or attempts suicide.

This belief owes much of the force and popularity it acquired during the first half of the present century, and whatever of these same it still retains, to the advocacy of some celebrated alienists whose influence on the thinking world of their generation was very great. I refer more particularly to MM. Esquirol, Falrèt, and Bourdin.

M. Esquirol is not entirely consistent in his judgments respecting the mental quality of the suicide act; but, if his more general declarations are to be taken as representing his real conviction on this matter, he must be ranked among the foremost of those who hold that no one attempts suicide unless during an attack of insane delirium.[1]

[1] *Maladies Mentales*, p. 578.

M. Falrèt, who came after Esquirol, adopted the same conclusion, and asserted it even more emphatically than his predecessor.

It will be observed, however, on a study of the writings of these very able advocates of the insane theory of suicide, that the facts they adduce refuse to be entirely governed by their one-sided assumption.

M. Bourdin, who adopted the insane theory of suicide in its unqualified sense, not only declared that it is always a malady, and that all suicides are insane, but saw in the very precautions taken by many suicides to insure the successful execution of their purpose, unmistakable evidences of mental unsoundness. "The phenomena preceding the accession" (of the suicide impulse), he says, "are constant; wherefore the sick (*malades* and suicides are evidently synonymous with M. Bourdin) prepare for some time beforehand, arrange their affairs, write to their friends, choose the place where they shall die, artfully arrange every thing necessary to the accomplishment of their purpose, take every precaution to insure success." * * * And, after much to the same purpose, he adds: "It is rare not to find evidence of mental trouble in the writings of which I have spoken; for even when the method of reasoning is sound, an exaltation of sentiment is perceptible, a warmth of soul which borders on passion."[1]

An "exaltation of sentiment" and "warmth of soul" bordering on passion, are certainly not evidences of insanity. But this by the way. The real point to be noticed is that Bourdin adduced the various acts which precede suicide to prove in an *ex parte* way its necessarily insane character. He reasoned in a vicious circle in his

[1] *Du Suicide Considéré comme Maladie*, Paris, 1845.

attempt to establish this conclusion. He said suicide is an insane act because the deeds that precede it must be of an insane character. And he demonstrated this proposition by showing that the deeds are of an insane character because suicide is an insane act.

But after all, if we search a little further we shall find that the belief in the necessarily insane character of the suicide act is founded on a still wider assumption. The strongest instinct implanted in the human breast is taken to be the instinct of self-preservation, the instinct of clinging to life. Every sane man, it is supposed, must, by the very force and constancy of this instinct, shun death, insomuch that death is sought by no one, except during an access of insane fury. But it will hardly be necessary to insist that, however strong the instinct of self-preservation may be—and no one denies its strength,—it is not a reliable test for distinguishing between the sane and the insane. If any considerations be required in proof of this assertion, they can be had by extending the field of observation beyond the range of suicide. The instinct of self-preservation is not so strong as to keep men from exposing themselves to all but sure death in some forlorn-hope on the field of battle, or even to sure death, as when they surrender themselves for execution in some cause, religious, political, or what not, in which they take an absorbing interest. However strong the instinct of self-preservation may have been in Regulus—and he probably had his full share of it,—it did not prevent him from returning to a cruel death among his Carthagenian foes, against the entreaties of his own countrymen. The instinct of self-preservation, moreover, is preservative against pain as well as death; but how numerous the examples of pain—agonizing pain even—endured in

some cause, in support of some principle dear to the sufferer!

The fact is, the feeling of self-preservation has not an absolute force. Its power is relative to that exercised by the various other motives influencing human conduct. If it had an absolute force in the martyr, he would not go willingly to the stake. If it had an absolute force in the soldier, he would not brave death on the battle-field. If it had such force in each and every individual of the human race, there would be no suicides. But it has no such force. Its power and influence are limited by the power and influence of whatever motive, in seasons of enthusiasm, of strong conviction, of deep distress, carries individuals away,—the martyr to the stake for religion; the soldier to the battle-field for his country; Regulus to the barbarous Carthagenians for his honor; the suicide to escape the torments of his mind.

Reverting now to M. Bourdin's assertion regarding the insane indications of the business and precautionary acts of suicides, it will not be very difficult to show its fallacy. For this purpose we will drop the question of suicide a few moments, and take up some other deed. Let it be a murder. We will suppose that A. has determined to take the life of B., and that he will do it the first opportunity that presents itself. He buys a pistol and ammunition, practises at a target until he acquires a sure and steady aim, watches his intended victim, learns his habits and haunts, and when he thinks the time at hand for the accomplishment of his revengeful purpose, he steals upon him and shoots him dead. All this appears afterward; and it comes to be known also that, fearing B. might draw his pistol in self-defence and be beforehand in killing him, he had taken the precaution to arrange his

business affairs and make a will. Suppose all this to have taken place, what evidence does it afford of the murderer's insanity? None whatever. Why, then, should similar circumstances be accepted as proof that the intending suicide is necessarily insane.

It cannot be too strongly impressed on the mind that suicide is, *per se*, no more evidence of insanity than crime against the lives and properties of others. We must go behind the act to discover its character. We must include in the scope of our inquiry not only the business and precautionary arrangements made by the suicide, but his family and personal history; and not only these again, but his physical and mental state for some time before the act, together with the declarations he leaves behind him. If there be a family history of insanity, or of some nervous disease to which insanity is affiliated, that is strong presumptive evidence that the suicide was insane when he destroyed himself. And this becomes a positive assurance if he have previously shown symptoms of mental derangement.

As a material part of the testimony admissible in all such cases, the written declarations of self-destroyers are of great value. Sometimes these declarations are sufficient of themselves, because they evince such manifest indications of sanity, or insanity, as the case may be, that there is no need to go behind them for other evidence of the mental state of the suicide. Here, for example, is a declaration which no other than a sane man could have penned. It was left by a stenographer who, a few hours after writing it, shot himself through the heart, on the 23d day of January, 1878, because he had failed to secure permanent employment. The verdict of the jury was: "We find that ——— came to his death by a pistol-shot

wound of the left breast, by his own hands, while laboring under temporary aberration of mind."

NEW YORK, *Jan.* 22d, 1878.

Dear Mr. ——— : I trust you will excuse my writing to you, as I shall not probably bother you for some time. I have advertised repeatedly to try and get steady work, but I have not been able to get it ; my money is running out, and I think it is best for me to end my life, before I be dependent upon any one, and while I have enough money to pay my funeral expenses. I wish first to thank you for your kindness to me since I have known you, and to assure [you] that I feel sincerely grateful to you. I have done my best to qualify myself in my business, thinking that if I did not succeed I would at least deserve success, but it is not my fate to succeed, and I may as well accept it without whining. I know that when I commit suicide people will say I am a fool and a lunatic, and such complimentary terms, but I don't care for the kick of an ass, though I can't help feeling it. I will be beyond all that very soon, however. I have minded my own business in life, have paid my own way, and done as much good as I could, and will put my trust in God for the next world. Perhaps I may find out that there is a hell, though I think we have hell enough on earth without manufacturing one for the hereafter. At any rate, if there is a hell, it is a comfort to know that "there will be no more Winter there." Thanking you once more for your kindness to me, I remain yours truly, ———

The phrase "temporary aberration of mind" in verdicts like the above is well conceived. It affords sufficient scope for the exercise of human indulgence without committing the jury to any definite statement. Apart from whatever influence such a verdict is calculated to have on any legal issue that may be involved in the death, the only serious objection to it, where the evidence points the other way, is that it may possibly promote suicide by its leniency. This point will be referred to in the next chapter.

Another example of a sane declaration immediately before suicide is the following:

NEW YORK, *May* 6, 1873.

My dear ——— : I have tried to combat against this step, but it is of no avail. All the hints and illustrations that surround me are too late to benefit me. I am fully aware what my fate would be were I still to cling to this world. Take good care of the children, and watch over them closely till they are sure of their own foothold. I enclose you a draft received yesterday from Texas; you can endorse it. I also enclose you a blank check and in your favor on ——; they owe me about $1,700 less interest, and are carrying, as you know, 100 shares of Pacific Mail, which you should take up and hold on for much higher prices, or as you deem best. The rest of my affairs you know all about; you have the deeds of the lots in ——.

God bless you and the children, is my last prayer. Write to father and mother, and try and comfort their declining years; I would write to them, but it would do no good. Your father and mother have always treated me as their own son, and their reward will come.

Have faith in God and strengthen yourself by paying your devotion to him, and go regularly to the temple dedicated to his worship. Neglect God, and he will neglect you, and neglect those who come after you. These last few lines are the only inheritance I can leave you, but they are worth something.

Your affectionate husband, ———.

The writer of the above letter had been unfortunate in his regular business and in some speculative ventures, and, besides, he had been for a long time a sufferer from neuralgia. He was thirty-five years old when he died.

It is just as easy to see unmistakable evidence of insanity in the following letter, even were there no proof that, for several months previous to his demise, its author was possessed of the delusion that he had invented a powder which, if sprinkled on the dead, would restore them to life. It will be observed that the motive for his suicide was a desire to give the sceptical an opportunity to convince themselves that his discovery had the power he claimed for it.

To my Benighted Friends :

It is now 2.20 A.M. of Saturday, March 3, 1877, and my mind is fully made up to pass the ordeal, of which I am to be the sacrifice. The mysteries that lie unfolded in the physical part of man will, in a short time, be given to the world. Having failed in my efforts to satisfy scientific men of the truth, soundness, and utility of this grand discovery by experiments in the animal world ; and knowing that such an invaluable secret is held only by myself, I shall, before six hours have passed, give the world sufficient proof of my reasonings. The Almighty Being gave man faculties, and placed before him powers, leaving him to penetrate their apparent mysteries. But to me who has brought to light these hidden powers, every thing is plain, and when we notice our actions to harmonize with our occult qualities, we have no fear of a change in our constitutional elements. When this mighty agent controls the action and guides the course of our atomizing bodies, we advance one step higher in our change, nearing conviction at each successive stage and at last reach perfection. All is life to him who has life, all is death to him who has death, all is hope to him who has hope. My physical atomic state, after the ordeal, I desire shall be taken in charge by Prof. McLouth, of the State Normal School, who, taking a portion of my "creative, all-changeful material assistant," will scatter a few particles over the dissectary remains, and then place them in the receptacle of my "galvanic, magnetic, electrical" power, when the elements will resolve themselves into a new combination, and I will appear a living evidence of the truth of this new discovery.

The insanity manifested by this unfortunate person was of the nature of mania with elation. It seldom terminates in suicide.

Between the extremes of well-marked sane impulses to suicide on the one hand, and equally well-marked insane impulses in the same direction on the other, there is a large number of intermediate cases, the precise classification of which is sometimes doubtful. These, however, may be fairly judged by the following rules, in addition to whatever special points are furnished by each case.

(1) Sanity is to be inferred in a suicide when its history gives no symptom indicative either of mental derange-

ment or of bodily disease; when, also, the resolution to die is reached after mature reflection on actually existing facts of so serious a character as to afford a reasonable motive for self-inflicted death.

(2) Insanity is to be inferred in a suicide when the personal or the family history of the victim gives other symptoms of mental derangement besides the one afforded by the mode of death; when, in addition to the possession of a subjective temperament, there have been indications of bodily disease; when the resolve to die occurs as the final explosion of a series of explosive emotional states, and is either not explicable by the motives actuating it, or is extremely disproportionate to them.

The seemingly deliberate, cold-blooded way in which some suicides are perpetrated, affords of itself no conclusive evidence of the victim's state of mind, except that the more unusual the mode of suicide the stronger the reason for supposing it the act of a lunatic. But, in the absence of any thing extraordinary in the mode, deliberation in the procedure is no proof of unsoundness of mind.

Delusion is, perhaps, the feature most common among the insane; at the same time, it may give such an air of consistency to their reasoning and conclusions, that the presence of insanity in any particular case may only be discoverable by getting at the clue which delusion affords.

Whether a given delusion will lead to homicide or suicide, depends on two things chiefly,—the temperament of the insane person, and the character of his delusion. If the temperament be objective, of that sanguine-nervous kind especially which is by nature prone to aggression, and if the delusion be that some one is plotting against

the life, possessions, or character of the insane patient, then the result may be an assault on the supposed enemy, with intent to kill or do him bodily harm. If, on the other hand, the temperament be subjective, and of that bilious-lymphatic character especially which is so prone to brood over its own thoughts and feelings, and if the delusion be of a kind to cause profound sadness with apprehensions of personal safety here, or of salvation hereafter, then the result is apt to be suicide. Sometimes these two tendencies are combined in the same person, one suggesting itself as a dread possibility, to avoid which the other is thought of and ultimately adopted. Instances are not infrequent in which, to escape the temptation to kill her children, a mother kills herself. In these examples the homicidal tendency proves weaker than the suicidal. When they are of equal strength, then occur those terrible tragedies in which the insane man slaughters his enemy first and then himself.

These delusions may take any shape consistent with the temperament, disease, and surroundings of the patient; but their dominant feeling is one of regard for self. Such is the case at all events respecting the delusions of melancholia. True, these are also compounded of fears, regrets, and apprehensions relative to others; but, with hardly an exception, they are all sooner or later brought to the focus of personal feeling and viewed through its magnifying lens. At one time there may be poignant remorse, due to imaginary loss of affection for one's family; at another a profound, and of course, much exaggerated sense of personal unworthiness, such as affected the poet William Cowper; and, lastly,—though this by no means exhausts the protean varieties of these delusions,—they may come in the disguise of a voice, as of God or some good

angel, summoning the sufferer to exchange his torments for the joys of the next world.

Whatever shape these delusions assume, there are two pretty constant features in insanity with a tendency to suicide, and these are: first, that in the large majority of instances the suicide impulse is a product of the existing delusion; and, secondly, that this impulse grows in the insane mind in a way similar to that which characterizes its growth in the sane mind; that is to say, leaving delusion out of the question, the development of insane impulses to suicide obeys the same mental laws that govern the development of suicidal impulses in the sane mind.

The only apparent exception to either of these propositions is applicable to the first, and is found among those cases of melancholia which become suicidal before delusions appear, or, more correctly speaking, before they are detected. But if the extreme difficulty of always detecting the delusions of melancholics in their early stages be considered, even this exception will seem more than doubtful. Conceding, however, that exceptions of this kind do occur, they scarcely affect the truth of the first of these propositions, while they leave the second quite intact, viz.: that the process of mental development of a suicide impulse is identical in the sane and the insane. The only material difference between the suicide impulse of sanity and insanity is, that the basis of the lunatic's impulse is visionary, while the basis of the sane man's is real.

This difference furnishes a reliable diagnostic test between diseased and healthy minds, but beyond this it is of small consequence to the present argument. It in no way changes the fact, that the process of mingled feeling

and emotion through which the resolve to commit suicide is reached is identical in the sane and the insane. The insane man determines to flee from an imaginary trouble which may have an element of exterior reality in it. The sane man determines to flee from a real trouble which usually has a large element of exaggeration in it. That is the fundamental difference between them.

If this be true, to what practical result does it lead? It overthrows the belief in the necessarily insane nature of the suicide act, which was so prevalent in former days, and is so common even yet. It shows that to learn its true quality we must study the mental state existing behind it.[1]

The percentage of insane suicides is much larger than the percentage of suicides among the sane. The exact relative proportion has not been made out; but it is certain that of the total of suicides, at least one third are caused by manifest lunacy, while another third, or perhaps even a larger proportion, are due to latent insanity or latent delusions, which latter, though carefully concealed so long as possible, gain new strength with each succeeding day, and often end in self-destruction.

The kind of insanity that most strongly tends to suicide is atonic melancholia. This is a disease in which, besides deep and massive depression generally, there is a settled weariness of life, a weariness not seldom aggravated by tormenting delusions and hallucinations. It is most frequently experienced by individuals in whom the subjective temperament predominates.

Suicide may also happen during a seizure of acute mania, marked by boisterous conduct and a tendency to destructiveness. In this class of cases the impulse to

[1] Such is, substantially, the view taken of suicide by the law of this State.

commit it arises suddenly in the fury of the moment, unlike the impulse of suicidal melancholy, which appears little by little, and takes shape gradually under the moulding influences of delusion and reflection.

In the opinion of many alienists there is another form in which the insane impulse to suicide arises. It is said to spring up suddenly, without apparent motive, and to execute its fell purpose without warning. However difficult it may be to explain this form of the impulse, its occurrence is not an impossibility. It is probably due to intense nerve irritation, for it happens almost exclusively among persons who are affected with explosive nervous diseases, such as epilepsy. In some rare instances it occurs as a climax to the nerve irritation set up by derangement of some extra-cerebral organ, as exemplified in a case previously narrated (p. 233 *ante*). It is akin most likely to the instinctive rage for self-destruction that sometimes infects the lower animals. Travellers in South America have observed it among sheep, whole flocks of which will plunge over precipices or into rivers, and destroy themselves without any ascertainable cause. "I know not," says an intelligent observer,[1] "whether it is superior intelligence or want of intelligence, but South American sheep have a reprehensible habit—that of destroying themselves if they are deprived of sufficient food, or are exposed to excessive cold. They start out in immense droves at the top of their speed. Let them reach the side of a deep ravine, and if one of the flock springs into it and is dashed to death, every sheep behind him will follow the example. If they come to a stream, let the leader take a plunge, and every one at his back will strike the water with a bleat expressive of the

[1] Chief Officer A. McJeffrey, steamship *Archimedes*.

knowledge of what is to come." Suicides of this character occur among horses and dogs also.

M. Marc gives some striking examples of this instinctive monomania for suicide in his work *Sur la Folie*. One of these will be given here. It is the case of a woman forty-three years of age and mother of six children. From her youth up she had delicate health, aggravated by severe hysterical headaches at each return of her menstrual flow. After one of these attacks had lasted several days, she was sitting in her doorway sewing, and to all appearances quite happy. Of a sudden, without any warning, she sprang up, crying out that she must drown herself; and, suiting the action to the word, she jumped into the moat of the town, from which she had the good fortune to be immediately rescued. On coming to herself several hours afterward, she remembered nothing of what had occurred. She never could explain why she had attempted to drown herself, and always expressed her deep gratitude to those who had saved her.[1]

There is, then, sufficient evidence to warrant the statement that an instinctive monomania for suicide does exist. It appears to be caused by an extreme degree of central nerve irritation. Quite likely it occurs in those patients only who are affected by, or at least predisposed to, explosive disorders of the nervous system.

[1] The reader is referred to the account of Alfieri's attempt at suicide, p. 143 *ante*.

BOOK III

PREVENTION OF SUICIDE

CHAPTER I.

Prevention by Law.

THE questions now suggest themselves: Can suicide be prevented; and, if so, by what means?

Before indicating the means by which, in my opinion, suicide may in some measure be prevented, it will be advisable to state the views of a few distinguished writers who have given the former of these questions a negative, or at least doubtful answer.

The researches of Quetelet in the beginning of this century showed a degree of uniformity theretofore undreamt of in the yearly reproduction of crimes, whether of an objective character like murder, or of a subjective one like suicide.

The statistics of suicide demonstrate that although the numbers of those who kill themselves vary from year to year, yet their averages for periods of years—ten to twenty, say—remain a pretty fixed quantity. Though in London, for instance, the number of suicides annually recorded about the middle of this century ranged all the way from 213 to 266, yet their average for groups of successive years was 240.[1]

Struck by this uniformity, of which the London showing is but one out of many examples, Quetelet reason-

[1] It is at present about 260.

ably concluded that it could not be fortuitous. He went, therefore, behind the phenomena themselves for information respecting their causes, and discerned in the moral and material conditions of society the knowledge he was in search of. He expressed his discovery in a formula of which the following words contain the substance: Society prepares the crimes which criminals execute.

Hereby, in all probability, Quetelet did not mean to convey that the criminal is a mere puppet in the hands of society, nor that social laws exist as an arbitrary power outside of human nature, to which the predestined, as we may say, must succumb, and against which it were useless for them to struggle. What he most likely meant was, that these laws are a reflex of human nature, an aggregate result of that action and interaction between the multitude of passions and interests which go on continually in complex societies. There is nothing very formidable in this. It is only an epigrammatic way of saying that in a corrupt society there is more crime than in a society of better moral tone. The historical chapters of this work show that such has always been true with regard to suicide; that suicide has always increased with the decline of religious faith and moral restraints.

But, doubtless, Quetelet also meant that, like other crimes, suicide is a consequence of changes affecting the material conditions of peoples as well as their religious and moral tone. And this additional interpretation of his meaning is abundantly sustained in the analytical part of this work. Besides the facts there given, many more might be adduced. Suicide is comparatively infrequent in countries where the material conditions are favorable to health and happiness, where peasant proprietorship in land prevails, and there are ample employment and fair

remuneration for labor. It is a rare occurrence among the Chinese in the United States, though very common in their native land. Taking the statistics from which the average suicide rate of London thirty odd years ago was calculated, they show that the largest number of voluntary deaths in that city happened during 1846—the year of the great English railroad panic. After 1837 the suicide rate of France rose from 7.2 in the 100,000 of population until it reached 12.8 in 1847,—a year disastrous to all classes of French society, and more especially so to the working class. The vital statistics of Ireland show an increase of suicides from 757 to 841 in the decade that witnessed the great potato famine and its desolating consequences. There is hardly an end to the illustrations that could be given of the relation which Quetelet discovered between the material conditions of communities and their tendency to crime.

But all this does not show, as Buckle thought it did, that man is but the blind and motiveless agent of an exterior law which he must perforce obey. "The general law," he says, in effect, "is that in a given state of society a certain number of suicides will be committed. The special question as to who shall commit the crime depends upon special laws, which must, however, obey the general law. So irresistible is the power of the larger law, that neither love of life nor fear of future punishment can avail any thing to check its operation." [1]

Governed by these and similar considerations, Buckle joined his predecessor Comte in denouncing "the folly of legal enactments against suicide." [2] In all probability they aimed their invective against future legislation only,

[1] *Civilization*, vol. i, pp. 19, 20.

[2] *Traité de Legislation*, vol. i, p. 486.

for it is not justified by the experience of the past. History contains not a few examples of the beneficial effect of penal enactments against suicide, *when they were rigidly executed.* Tarquin's proclamation suppressed an epidemic of suicide among his Roman troops. The edict of the Milesian authorities had an equally good effect upon the distracted maidens of their city. A timely intervention of the London authorities, a century ago, checked a rage for suicide in that city which threatened to involve great numbers of its inhabitants. The famous order of Napoleon I nipped a similar rage in the bud, and stopped its spread among his soldiers.

These, it will perhaps be said, are examples of special legislation called forth by emergencies. True; but even so, this does not weaken their force as an argument against the position assumed by Comte and Buckle. If, as Buckle holds, in substance, human beings are mere straws on the face of society, which any social disturbance may catch up and whirl about at its own will, then it is certain that these examples of the power of law to check suicide could never have existed.

But the power to deter, exerted through the channel of legal enactments, does not rest wholly on these exceptional cases. If we look back on the history of legislation relative to suicide, we shall find good grounds for believing that, whatever may be predicted of its influence in the future, it has been salutary in the past.

The force of the canonical decrees, quite as much as the spirit and teaching of primitive Christianity itself, abolished the practice of suicide not only within the confines of the old Roman civilization, but in barbarous lands also, where Christian missionaries were spreading the light of the true faith. So efficacious were those decrees,

so sufficient for the end to which they were adapted, that they neither invoked nor required any assistance from the civil power. The Church coped single-handed with one of the greatest evils that had grown up in the shadow of pagandom, and kept it under her heel so long as the world submitted to her guidance. But with the spread of the rational movement throughout Europe at the Renaissance, multitudes criticised the precepts of the Church, and denied her teaching authority. The purely human element in society went to the front line of advancing speculation; the divine element was lost sight of and forgotten. Self-will asserted its claims in opposition to lawful authority; self-indulgence mocked the Christian spirit of self-denial; moral restraints grew irksome, and were cast off; society fell away; the spirit of rebellion and passion walked abroad, and culminated in many murders and suicides.[1]

Then the civil power, observing the increase of suicide, and feeling perhaps the inadequacy of mere spiritual sanctions in the skeptical condition to which society had been reduced, invoked aid from the old Roman legislation, supplying its omissions and defects by new decrees, or Capitularies, conceived in the spirit of canonical law, but inflicting temporal as well as ecclesiastical penalties. It is a disputed question whether this repressive legislation, aided though it was by cruel local customs grafted here and there on feudal law, had any decided influence over the tendency to suicide. Nothing positive can be asserted under this head; though neither can any thing negative, and for the reason that the requisite statistical information on the subject is wanting. We may, how-

[1] For an ingenuous record of the state of society at this period, see the *Autobiography* of Benvenuto Cellini.

ever, surmise that this legislation, together with its aids, must have exerted some measure of wholesome influence in this respect, from what happened when society, for a second time since the Christian era, threw off the restraints of religion and plunged into the French Revolution. This event took place in 1789. The laws against suicide were abrogated in 1791. From 1794 until 1804 the yearly average of suicides in Paris was one hundred and seven.[1] On account of the absence of statistics before the period now mentioned, it cannot be said whether this average is or is not an increase over that of former years; but all doubt on the point is removed when we compare it with the average of subsequent years. During the period ending in 1837, the proportion of suicides relative to population had increased in France by 50 *per cent.*; and in 1847 it had reached the alarming extent of an increase by 78 *per cent.*[2] We are not, however, to conclude that this increase was owing entirely, or even chiefly, to the abrogation act of 1791. It is altogether more likely that both sprang from the same cause,—the spirit of rebellion against salutary restraint born of the French Revolution. Because, if we turn to England about the time the suicide laws were abrogated there, we find a different result. At no time has the suicide rate for all England exceeded 70 per million inhabitants, a fact which is due rather to the absence of widespread religious infidelity in England, than to the existence or non-existence there of laws against suicide.[3]

It is not likely, however, that the old legislation against *felo-de-se* will ever be revived. Still, it seems only right

[1] Brierre de Boismont, *Du Suicide et de la folie Suicide*, p. 354.

[2] Researches of M. de Foville, in *Saturday Review*, December, 1876.

[3] The first attempt to classify suicides by themselves in the reports of the Register-General of England was made in 1858.

and proper that the statutes of every civilized country should contain some prohibition of suicide under penalties which would satisfy the presumed moral sentiment of society without either insulting the body of the suicide or depriving his heirs of their inheritance.

It would have a beneficial effect if coroners' juries, when they have sufficient evidence to show the sanity of the suicide at the time of his death, would incorporate in their verdicts a clause denunciatory of self-murder as a crime disgraceful in itself and injurious to society.

Under the same condition with regard to evidence, there is a growing and even urgent need to punish attempts at suicide. On this point all serious-minded persons will agree with a recent writer, that "some real punishment, inflicted as a rule, would be a strong deterrent to those who are unable or unused to see moral crime in what is ignored or treated lightly by the law of the land." This writer suggests the punishment of imprisonment with hard labor for these attempts, and adds that the truest kindness would be found "in more seeming severity, in the attitude of the law, of moralists and of society, toward this form of murder, which is often more cowardly and less frequently followed by real penitence than those forms of the offence which are expiated on the scaffold." [1]

But whatever legislation may attempt in this necessary direction in the future, the apathy of contemporary society concerning the evil of suicide compels us to look to other means for its prevention. These means will be found in religious and moral training, and in medical treatment.

[1] Horsley, J. W., *Fortnightly Review*, April, 1881, Art. *Suicide*.

CHAPTER II.

Prevention by Religious and Moral Training.

THE reader who will refer to Chapter 1, Book II, where the relation of age and sex to suicide is considered, will find in the circumstances there indicated some hints on which the prevention of suicide by education may be based. There is nothing very special in the kind of education required for this purpose. It has hardly an ingredient of importance that is not also needed to make good men and women, and faithful citizens. Indeed, all education, on whatever system conducted, which makes good people and faithful citizens, must of necessity tend to diminish the frequency of suicide. But, if the theory advocated in this book have any practical value, it is certain that the foundation of whatever in education is peculiarly suited to the prevention of suicide, must lie in a knowledge of temperament and its influence on individual moral life.

We should begin, then, by noting one fact, that a great many, perhaps even a majority of children after the age of ten years are subjective in temperament. At that stage of their development they begin to lead self-conscious lives. They assert and endeavor to do their own wills,—they are wilful. They have not yet acquired fixity of purpose,—they are capricious. They see and feel

things not as they are, but as they appear to them,—they are sensitive. These three notes—self-will, caprice, sensitiveness, are at the bottom of the subjective temperament, and, if the theory of this book be true, they are also at the bottom of the suicidal tendency.

Wherefore, the plain inference is that, in the education of children, patient efforts should be made to tone down the more glaring defects of this temperament, while, at the same time, supplying them with rational guidance and support until they have a sufficient share of reason of their own. Now, on looking at the facts of suicide in childhood, it is perceived that some children kill themselves because their *caprices* are thwarted. Should this fact make us indulge the caprices of children? (Remember, their caprices, and not their reasonable and proper wishes.) Shall we buy this one whatever he asks for, and let that one stay away from school when he wants to, because he is a very sensitive and self-willed child, and, if we don't, he may run away from home, or possibly kill himself? No; and if you have a suspicion that your refusal will produce any such tendency, you should give a good honest reason for it, delivered in a kindly way; you should turn his thoughts dexterously from the object he asks for, and you should keep him under your eye for a sufficient length of time. But, really, when a child has been allowed to form the habit of feeling that way, he is already spoiled by unwise indulgence; and it is such spoiling that favors the growth of those moral defects which lead to child-suicides. The moral training of children should begin long before this unfortunate stage has been reached; as early, indeed, as the second year. Then it is that temperament and the selfish instincts of our nature begin first to assert themselves. At that age the child who

cries for what it ought not to get—and it ought only to get the few and simple things that are suited to its time of life—must not get them. Very likely it will assert its self-will, now angered, by louder cries. But crying is a good exercise for babies' lungs, and ought not to be interfered with, at least for a reasonable time after the coveted article is refused. Then, the experiment may be made of trying to soothe the little one by kind words, or to divert its feelings by some play. Occasionally this succeeds; but the chances are the little rebel will push you angrily away and cry louder. Go away. Do not stay when your presence only serves to irritate it more. After a time its irritation gives place to happier feelings. Meanwhile you have taught the child its first moral lesson,—that there is a will superior to its own. Gradually as it grows up it will recognize this fact more and more, and accept it. Gradually it will learn the lesson of submissive obedience, the first stage of the moral training which is preventive of suicide.

As it advances toward its eighth year the child stands in need of some degree of fixed purpose. Its thoughts and feelings are aimless—except, of course, those stirred by affection for the persons and objects of home; its muscular efforts are explosive and incoördinate; its aims are unsteady and often changed for other aims; it is capricious in mind and body. Shall this capriciousness be allowed to go on because interference with it would thwart the workings of nature? No; there are destructive as well as preservative forces in nature. Caprice has a destructive tendency. Suffer your child to become capricious and he can never know the benefits of self-restraint; never know the elevating sentiment those expe-

rience who direct their energies to the accomplishment of the aims of life.

But at this stage of the training process you want more help than what is afforded by the simple assertion of mild yet firm authority ; and, luckily, your observation of certain facts disclosed by the unfolding of the child's mind supplies you with the hint you may be waiting for. You see in the child of this age the germs of his future reason. Nurse these germs ; encourage them. Teach the child gently and impressively to control himself. Yet be not over-critical. Let some things pass. Do not seek to accomplish all results in this direction at once. Always select that fault for correction which most tends to injure future happiness. If you succeed in correcting it, who knows after how many trials and discouragements, you will find that many other faults have been mended too in the same time ; and you will have subdued caprice ; you will have given the child the elements of purpose, endurance, hope ; you will have taught him that he is bound to use his faculties for practical ends ; you will have conducted him to the second stage of that moral training which is preventive of suicide.

The child now advances to an age in which its relational life assumes more variety and complexity. It begins to inquire somewhat closely into the reasons of things. Its budding imagination demands other pasture than the nursery tale and rhyme. It seeks the society of playmates outside the household. If we look into these facts we may resolve them into a desire for a life more varied than that which formerly contented him. This desire should be encouraged under wise restrictions. The child's reading matter must be carefully selected.

There must be an *Index Expurgatorius* in every household, and this index must contain many publications that are not so carefully excluded from his intellectual bill of fare as they should be. Let us keep our intention ever in view. We wish to let the soil of emotional consciousness lie fallow, while we cultivate the soil of reason. We wish to rear a being who

> With reason firm and temperate will"

shall learn how to combat and conquer difficulties; how, above all, to command his own feelings and passions. We desire to avoid the common blunder of allowing the emotional life to crop over the life which is moral and intellectual.

What, then, do we do? We put away from the child all that pernicious mass of literature which deals with unlawful adventure by flood and field,—tales of pirates and freebooters with their train of adventurous men and women who, like themselves, spend their lives in low intrigue or in a state of more open rebellion against law and morality. The number of children who are demoralized by this kind of literature is appalling. We give them, instead, tales of adventure which exhibit danger conquered by courage, difficulties overcome by ingenuity and perseverance, success won by foresight and patient endurance of all toil and calumny under the guiding hand of Providence. We give them *Robinson Crusoe*, and the *Swiss Family Robinson*, and *Thaddeus of Warsaw*, and supplement these with Hans Andersen's *Fairy Tales* to teach them the beauty of truthfulness, kindness, unselfishness, and the ugliness of their opposites. We take many opportunities of pointing out and explaining to them the moral lessons these good books

teach; and, as they get to understand these lessons, and to know how to apply them in this and that situation, whether in their own lives or the lives of others, we give them books of travel suited to their comprehension.

Now, you have taken two further and most important steps toward counteracting the tendency to subjectivism in the child: you have directed his mind to things exterior to himself; you have taught him by precept and example the value of self-reliance and of patient endurance.

But we have to follow the child out-of-doors, among his school companions and other associates. We must winnow these as we did his books. We must not permit him companions who may teach him any manner of vice: lying, a cowardly vice; slander, a devilish vice; swearing, a vice of ill-temper; and those sensual vices which surely destroy all our efforts to give an objective stamp to his character. Having selected his friends for him, he must be allowed his own preferences among them, though we should learn the reasons of his choice. With these friends we must make him loyal, truthful, kind, and forbearing. We must see to it also that in all his dealings with them he knows his own rights and will manfully defend them. We must let them settle their quarrels among themselves, though we should insist that they be settled by reason, not by force.

You have now taught your child respect for himself and his rights, respect for others and their rights, and thus prepared him to shun two of the greatest incentives to suicide in later years,—the compromise of one's self, and the compromise of one's neighbor. You have fitted him to enter confidently upon the first period of his adult

life. While doing all this you are not neglecting his out-of-door amusements, which should be of a nature to make him hardy, vigorous, and healthy.[1]

While training the child after this method, two possible faults in yourself are to be shunned in an especial manner,—injustice and impatience. Children appreciate justice. They are seldom injured by merited blame, if so administered as to impress them with its reasonableness and necessity. The teacher should be blind to some defects, while generous in his approval of all good deeds and efforts. It is important to give the child a happy, sunny mind, which nothing better secures than liberal encouragement of all his constructive efforts and honest approval of all his achievements. In teaching children self-discipline and the rest, the teacher's manner has much to do with his success. Impatient demonstrations of any kind, on his part, have evil tendencies. They alienate the affectionate regard of the child, while weakening his confidence in himself so much, that, in after emergencies, he may doubt and hesitate where he should act with firmness and decision. They injure the teacher's influence, too, by exhibiting him in a more or less repulsive light to his pupil. Blame should be so administered as to impress the child's mind without wounding his feelings. It is best visited by gesture and expression of face, without words. Approval, on the contrary, should be a frank and open declaration by expressive gesture and impressive words.

While training the characters of children, abundance of the sunlight of a bracing sympathy should be shed upon them, in order that they may wax strong and healthy in

[1] With some changes, which the intelligence of the reader will easily supply, this scheme is applicable to girls as well as boys.

mind and body. There is much truth in Sydney Smith's observation, "That if you make children happy now, you make them happy twenty years hence by the memory of it."

It is important also to avoid urging children on, more especially in intellectual competition with their rivals. Apart from the immediate moral and physical risks of forced competition in school exercises,—envy, anger, disappointment, exhausting nervous excitement, and the rest,—there is one remote danger to which attention is not sufficiently drawn,—the danger of suicide. Some recent competitive examinations in this country have unfortunately been distinguished by the suicides of children whose health had given way under hard study combined with anxiety and sleepless nights. Nine such occurred in London also during 1878. A London journal, commenting on these suicides, remarks: "At present what with the multiplicity of subjects, the constant alterations in books, and the unending changes in examiners, it is no wonder if the poor fellows are sometimes in distraction. It has sometimes been said that we should never get rid of railway accidents until a Bishop is killed; and it suggests the question, how many students must commit suicide before the authorities introduce a more humane and rational system of examination?"

It is wrong to urge the intellects of children, and worse still to do so regardless of their health, regardless, too, of whether they acquire good habits and impulses. It is a vice of our system of education that the mental powers of the rising generation are urged to the danger point, for no better reason apparently than to gratify the silly vanity of parents and teachers. Good health and the parts of a sound character, be it ever remembered, are the pil-

lars on which intellectual eminence reposes; and without their support it must fall.

"The child is father to the man." No truer words have ever been uttered. What the child is taught to be, that the man will be. If he is taught to be conscientious, courageous, self-respecting, the man will have like qualities, enhanced by years and experience.

Now, the first stage of life at which the precepts indicated above are put to the test, is the stage of adolescence, lasting from the fifteenth to the twenty-fifth year. What are the dangers of this period? They are the dangers of indulged feeling and emotion, the dangers of subjectivism. What is the feeling that gives physical support to the subjectivism of this period? The sexual feeling. What gives the sexual feeling predominance in the field of emotional life? Prurient imagination. Therefore, we say to young men and women, if you must think of sexual matters at all, view them as they are, not as they appear to you through the medium of an excited imagination, or the medium of the emotion of so-called love. Think of them as animal, as shared with you by the very brutes of creation. Think of them as degrading, and destructive of your liberty and self-respect. True love is spiritual; it braces the soul, softens the hard blows of evil fortune, and elevates the aims of life. Knowing true love from its counterfeit, you will be armed against the toils of the subtle, deceitful woman, the snares of the sensual man; you will escape entanglements that bring many young people to suicide, many youths growing into manhood particularly, whom a certain class of vile women seek for prey.

But an equally fruitful cause of this terrible end, at

the age now under consideration, is indulgence in those aspirations after the unattainable which have a natural tendency to end in disappointment, discouragement, and disgust of life.[1] You must never indulge these aspirations. Your ideal must be a practical one; your work every-day work. You must, as Carlyle says, "Do the duty which lies nearest to you," and keep mind as well as body down to this duty. If you do not let your thinking end in action, it will end in indecision and discontent,—traits of character which lie at the root of the impulse to suicide.[2] Work will never hurt you. It is ill-regulated feeling and passion that lead to suicide. Avoid the reading of novels, the witnessing of plays that excite sentiment without giving it a practical aim and a worthy exterior object. Read travels, histories, and historic novels like those of Sir Walter Scott; but read *away from* the book; look at its facts and sentiments as you would look at trees, or any object in external nature; regard them on every side; gain a scientific knowledge of them, and pass on.

Read the New Testament. Study the human element in Christ. Imitate, as near as in you lies, its calm power, its noble patience, its tenderness without weakness, its

[1] "Revery has in all times inspired a disgust for labor, and led to suicide. There is in Stobæus an account of a young man who, compelled by his father to undertake agricultural work, hung himself, leaving a letter in which he declared that agriculture was too monotonous a trade, that it was always necessary to sow in order to reap, and to reap in order to sow, and that this circle was endless and insupportable."—Girardin, *Lectures on Dramatic Literature*, N. Y., p. 75.

[2] "The preponderance of thought and speech over action, together with a fatal indecision of will, constitutes the basis of the character of Hamlet, such as Shakespeare has conceived it. It is this which lies at the bottom of all the heroes of suicide. If we set aside those grand sentiments of which they make parade, if we penetrate into those unquiet souls, we find nothing but indecision and feebleness. They prefer rather to indulge in speculation than in action, until, in order to rid themselves of the burdens of existence, they seek refuge in eternal repose."—*Ibid.*, p. 82, note.

love without sentiment. Select the human Christ for your model above all models.

Thus you grow into full manhood, or womanhood, a strong, well-balanced character, armed against the attacks of sensuality and the snares of sentiment, both so imperilling to young lives, so apt to lead to suicide.[1]

You have now passed into ripe manhood, in many respects the most trying time of life. If you refer again to the chapter on Age and Sex, you may see what its dangers and trials are. You are liable to be assailed by doubts respecting religious and moral truths, by business worries and anxieties, by domestic troubles, and by ill-health; and, furthermore, if you inherit any disease tendencies, this is the time in which they are most likely to assail you. Now, there is one very sovereign cure for all these troubles, including to a certain extent even disease, and that cure is religion, meaning by religion faith in God, His goodness, His power, and His mercy. You may perhaps boast in your own heart, as many do who have not had occasion to feel the saving power of this faith,—you may boast in your heart and say to yourself that with your own strong arm alone you will scatter the foes marshalled against you, and cleave a way through the trials, dangers, calumnies, and misfortunes of life; but in the hour of real peril you will find you are mistaken; you will find you cannot do it without the aid which is given by faith. What you and I and many others may have boasted in our own hearts, was once the firm conviction of philosophers in pagandom, who built up an elaborate and consistent scheme of ethics on a basis of human will-power alone, and how they failed! how many of them committed suicide to get away from

[1] See Appendix, H.

a world they did their best to ignore! Scientists will tell you, men who go about the country mouthing paradoxes will tell you, that reason and a decent social morality are all one needs to carry him through life. Social morality is a part of religion, and so is reason; but in the actual dangers, the heavy trials of life; in hours of pain, depression, gloom, when reason is swallowed up in the flood of emotion and you feel the slackening of all social ties, you need faith, or you may be lost. The scientists who tell you, if any do, that a knowledge of the nebular hypothesis, or the theory of gravitation, will help you in such times, are talking foolishness. The scientists who tell you, as some do, that there is no God, Creator of the world and Father of the human race, acknowledge this teaching to be the product of their seasons of depression and morbid gloom.[1] It is the tendency of all minds that have not a firm hold on vital religious truth to lose what hold they have in hours of despondency, nay, sometimes even, "To curse God and die."

The theory of the Christian Church is grand in this among many other things, that it makes the rivulets of love which flow from the human heart toward lover, friend, family, tributaries to the great river of love

[1] Professor Tyndall, in the authorized report of his address to the British Association at Belfast, makes this acknowledgement in the following words :—

"In connection with the charge of atheism, I would make one remark. Christian men are proved by their writings to have their hours of weakness and of doubt, as well as their hours of strength and of conviction; and men like myself share, in their own way, these variations of mood and tense. Were the religious views of many of my assailants the only alternative ones, I do not know how strong the claims of the doctrine of 'Material Atheism' upon my allegiance might be. Probably they would be very strong. But, as it is, I have noticed during years of self-observation that it is not in hours of clearness and vigor that this doctrine commends itself to my mind; that in the presence of stronger and healthier thought it ever dissolves and disappears, as offering no solution of the mystery in which we dwell, and of which we form a part."

that goes, with all its freight of joy and sorrow, to God. In this grand theory love is a part of religion, touched by its holy calm. Where such love exists there will be no domestic troubles to harry and wear the heart of man, and make him wish for the peace of death.

Now you have, in addition to the training already received, a strong religious faith; and with this your character is equipped in all its parts. Unless disease shall come upon you and overturn your reason, you can go into the battle of life, and bear your part in it to the end without danger of dying the death of the suicide.

Some five or six years ago the Jewish ladies of Paris petitioned their spiritual heads to keep the synagogues open all day long, alleging the practice of the Catholic churches in that particular, and declaring that "many a person driven to despair and bent upon suicide enters these churches and obtains consolation." There is no doubt that suicides are prevented in this way, both immediately by calming emotion and dispelling gloom, and remotely by forming habits of prayer for Divine assistance in the great trials of life; and it would be well if this example of the Catholic Church were universally followed.

It is of great consequence to happiness to know how to receive the shocks of evil fortune. Painful experiences should be allowed to diffuse themselves over the mind, and no immediate attempt should be made to react against them.[1] There are two reasons for this. Such experiences are weakened by diffusion, and the time

[1] According to Mr. James Sully there are four ways of accepting inevitable pain: "(1) with a flow of tender feeling leading to passive resignation; (2) with volitional endurance and consequent diminution of its intensity; (3) with total prostration of mind leading to feeble complaint; (4) with bitterness and defiance leading to angry denunciation."—*Pessimism*, note to p. 419.

gained by waiting allows the mind an opportunity to collect its faculties for effective action. Once well-regulated efforts are put forth in the right direction to remedy personal evil, the immediate danger of suicide passes away; but such efforts absolutely require that the mind should have recovered to a considerable extent from the shock it has received.

To fortify on all sides against the extreme depression that evil fortune is prone to cause, bodily health should be maintained. The need of this is shown in the example, among others, of the English painter Hayden, who died by his own hand. He had passed successfully through a series of reverses until his health began to fail. Then his powers of endurance waned, and he killed himself with the advent of fresh misfortune. Nearly all suicide is a practical commentary on this fact.

The faculty of hoping should always be encouraged. It is strengthened by recalling former states of cloud and depression which passed away, leaving the sun of prosperity to shine as bright as before. It is also strengthened by calling to mind similar episodes in the lives of others. To many besides Mary Wolstonecraft, who paced up and down Putney Bridge suffering the rain to wet her garments that she might sink with greater certainty in the river, the darkest hour has ushered in the dawn of a happier life.

For men to whose minds suicide occurs as a release either from misfortune or the consequences of their crimes, Dr. Samuel Johnson's advice, as stated by Boswell, is perhaps the best that can be offered:

"We talked of a man's drowning himself.—Johnson: 'I shall never think it time to make away with myself.' I put the case of Eustace Budgell, who was accused of

forging a will, and sunk himself in the Thames before the trial of its authenticity came on. 'Suppose, sir,' said I, 'that a man is absolutely sure that if he lives a few days longer he shall be detected in a fraud, the consequence of which will be utter disgrace and expulsion from society.' Johnson: 'Then, sir, let him go abroad to a distant country. Let him go to some place where he is not known; don't let him go to the devil where he is known.'"

[1] Boswell, *Life of Johnson*, N. Y., 1878, p. 262.

CHAPTER III.

Prevention by Medical Advice and Treatment.

PERSONS who are prone to attacks of melancholy should marry, provided they have not inherited a tendency to insanity. Statistics show that more unmarried persons kill themselves than married. Their marriages should be fruitful, as it is proved that the childless are far more prone to suicide than those who have children. The annexed table illustrates this fact.

SUICIDE AND STATE OF FAMILY.

IN 1,000,000 OF EACH WITH CHILDREN.	NO. OF SUICIDES.	IN 1,000,000 OF EACH WITHOUT CHILDREN.	NO. OF SUICIDES.
Husbands . . .	. . 205	Husbands . . .	. . 470
Wives . . .	. . 45	Wives	. . 157
Widowers . . .	. . 526	Widowers . . .	. . 1004
Widows . . .	. . 104	Widows	. . 238
Total	880	Total	1869

The temperaments of man and wife should be neither very much alike nor too dissimilar. She should be cheerful and placid. Choice should be made of a natural woman, with gentle, retiring disposition, and strength of character. The atmosphere surrounding such a woman

is tonic, bracing, exhilarating. Gushing, affected women, with soft and fawning manners, ought to be shunned. They are not honest, and they grievously impose on sensitive men. They never help them in trouble. They are snares to entrap them in unwary confidential moods. Like the octopus, or devil-fish, they put their slimy arms about men and pull them down into a sea of tribulation.

The husband's occupation should be neither monotonous nor sedentary. It should be interesting as a mental exercise, and of a kind to call forth the benevolent activities of his nature. He should overcome his natural tendency to retirement and solitude by frequent appearances in public, and by seeking opportunities for social intercourse. Ha should spend as much time as possible out-of-doors, and cultivate a taste for open-air games. He should not reside in a malarious district, because malaria intensifies his natural predisposition to melancholy. For the same reason he should avoid alcoholic stimulants, unless given him for some specific purpose and under precise medical directions both as to quantity and frequency of administration. These directions should never be omitted by the physician nor disregarded by the person who is responsible for their execution.

There is another reason why melancholics should be guided by medical advice in regard to the use of stimulants. There are cases of melancholy, due to simple nervous exhaustion, in which alcoholic stimulants are beneficial. They rouse the nervous system and so improve the tone of mind and body. But there are other forms of melancholy, due to foreign materials in the blood, which depress the nerves by their lethargic influence. Bile is one of these foreign agents, malaria is another. In these cases, but more particularly when the

bilious element predominates, alcohol increases depression, even to a dangerous degree sometimes, by its power to intensify subjective states while clouding the intellect and lessening self-control.

There is a particular faculty which every one should cultivate who is disposed to melancholy,—the faculty of analyzing states of feeling so as to separate facts from impressions. In seasons of gloom our impressions are distorted and much exaggerated. We feel and fear either without real cause or a great deal more than the facts warrant. If we could mentally separate our feelings from their actual or imaginary causes; if, as the homely but striking expression puts it, we would take our hearts between our two hands and study them, we might often succeed in convincing ourselves that not the facts but some fault in our own minds and bodies is responsible for the mental agitation and depression we suffer. There is much truth and wisdom in Montaigne's remark that "Things do not torment a man so much as the opinion he has of things." Not only, then, should this faculty be cultivated, but indulgence in any substance which, like intoxicating drink, blunts it for ready use, should be carefully avoided. Dr. Samuel Johnson's advice on this point is so admirable for its good sense that it should be remembered by all who are troubled with melancholy:

"Against melancholy he recommended constant occupation of mind, a great deal of exercise, moderation in eating and drinking, and especially to shun drink at night. He said melancholy people were apt to fly to intemperance for relief, but that it sunk them much deeper in misery. He observed that laboring men who work hard and live sparingly are seldom troubled with low spirits."[1]

[1] Boswell, *op. cit.*, p. 131.

When a person who is liable to attacks of mental depression shuns society, has no relish for his work, is silent and solitary at home, eats and sleeps little, a physician must be sought without delay. Sometimes these symptoms are dispelled by relieving a constipated habit of the bowels[1]; but generally they have their origin in some more serious local trouble, the indications of which will guide the physician to the right treatment. It is essential that sleep be procured, and for this purpose opium should be administered at bedtime, except in those cases that have an excess of blood in the brain, when chloral and the bromides should be substituted. None of these remedies should be given into the hands of the patient, and he should neither see nor hear any thing suggestive of the idea of suicide. On this account every weapon that could possibly be used for the purpose of self-destruction should be put away in a safe place, and no newspaper or other publication containing any thing on suicide should meet his eye.

The morning and evening hours are, of all parts of the day, the most depressing to the melancholy, and statistics show that they afford the largest number of suicides. This is exhibited in the table on the next page, which I extract from the *Annales D' Hygiene*, January, 1831.

The desponding man rises in the morning, after a weary and restless night, without any joy in the coming day; and with the setting sun he watches in fear and increas-

[1] An amusing illustration of this is furnished by the anecdote about Voltaire and the Englishman who visited him at Ferney. It happening that both suffered from depression of spirits at the time, they agreed to commit suicide together early the following morning. Punctually to the minute the resolute Englishman appeared, bearing with him the weapons of self-destruction; but Voltaire was in quite another mood this time. "I crave your pardon, sir," he said, "but my enema has acted very well this morning, and has changed all those notions I had." ("*Pardonnez moi, Monsieur, mais mon lavement a très bien opéré ce matin, et cela a changé toutes idees-là.*")

ing depression the approach of another dreadful night. A particular watch, therefore, should be kept over him at these hours, and every thing done to divert his mind and cheer him on.

The melancholic should occasionally cease his routine work, even though it be of a nature to engage mind as well as body,[1] and, if possible, take a change of air and scene. His mind should often be diverted by amusements. The theatre may be frequented to witness laugh-

SUICIDE AND TIME OF DAY.

TIME OF DAY.	SUICIDES.
Midnight to 2 o'clock,	77
2 " 4 "	45
4 " 6 "	58
6 " 8 "	135
8 " 10 "	110
10 " 12 "	123
12 " 2 "	32
2 " 4 "	84
4 " 6 "	104
6 " 8 "	77
8 " 10 "	84
10 " 12 "	71
	1,000

able exhibitions, such as negro minstrelsy, pantomime and comic opera; but tragic and dramatic performances should be shunned. Nourishing food should be given more often in the day than is required by a healthy person; and, while the patient's preferences as to articles of diet should be respected, he should not be permitted to refuse what is brought to him by direction of his physi-

[1] Occupations which engage the body while leaving the mind free to brood over real or fancied evils rather invite the suicide impulse. This is probably why it is so apt to occur to women while they are sewing.

cian. It is important to bear this latter fact in mind, for, apart from the settled determination of many melancholics to starve themselves to death, a liberal diet is one of the most efficacious means of restoring them to health. The condition of the patient's skin should be carefully attended to. Daily bathing or sponging with soap and water, followed by frictions with alcohol and water, or spirit of camphor and water, are valuable, and a Turkish bath once a week, or oftener, according to circumstances, is highly beneficial.[1]

If the melancholy intensify, and indications of insanity, however slight, appear, the patient should be sent to an asylum, or put at least under watchful supervision at home. Such people should always be suspected of a design to commit suicide, and guarded accordingly.

That a necessary degree of care and supervision, especially in an asylum, will deter from suicide, is shown by the following statement.

"In the examination of Commissioner Wilkes (Report of Dalrymple Committee), in the answer to question No. 748, he said: 'From a report which I obtained from the Register-General, which is at present not published, it seems that during the year 1865 there was (*sic*) about sixteen hundred patients in England alone who committed suicide; probably not all, but a great majority of them were insane, and they committed suicide for the want of proper care.' Lord Shaftesbury being subsequently examined, said in regard to this statement; 'Now, when I come to look into that statement by Mr. Wilkes, I find that these sixteen hundred suicides were committed by persons at large, while the number of sui-

[1] The writer disclaims any intention to write a strictly medical treatise, and therefore omits mention of many remedies, galvanism among the number, which are more or less efficacious in melancholy.

cides committed by persons under care and confinement amounted only to twenty-one, (nineteen?) and they were classified as follows: County and borough asylums, 11; hospitals, 3; metropolitan and licensed houses, 1; provincial licensed houses, 4. But the whole number of suicidal patients under confinement at present in the various asylums is 6,096. That return shows that unless they were under care and treatment they would in all probability, or the greater portion of them, have indulged their propensity, and would have committed suicide.' "[1]

Every threat to commit suicide, uttered especially by those who are depressed, worried, or out of health, should be seriously regarded, and deemed quite sufficient ground for much more than ordinary care and vigilance in their regard on the part of relatives and friends. A considerable number of persons who threaten suicide go further and make attempts at it as well. An attempt at suicide should awaken most serious apprehensions for the future of the person immediately concerned, and cause his family or friends to take prompt steps to secure his safety in an asylum.

[1] Dr. John P. Gray in *American Journal of Insanity*, July, 1878.

THE END.

APPENDIX.

A

Origin and History of Widow Sacrifice in Hindustan.

Suttee or Sati is akin to the Sanscrit Sacti, the term given to the female power in nature. (Brand, *Dictionary*, Art. *Suttee.*) The sacrifice known by that name is not enjoined in the Rig-Veda, oldest and most revered book of Hindu sacred scriptures, which rather implies its prohibition. But by a fraud on the text of this sacred book, the later Brahmins perverted this prohibition of the sacrifice into a positive command in its favor, so that it was enjoined in the Brahma-purānas, and in the codes of Vyāsa, An-giras, etc. "To Raghu-nandana (according to Dr. F. Hall) is due the alteration of the last word of a Rig-Veda text (x, 18, 7) on which the authority for sati was made to rest: *Anáśravo 'namivāh su-ratnā á rohantu janayo yonim agre*, 'without tears, without sorrow, bedecked with jewels, let the wives go up to the altar first,' where *agneh*, 'of fire,' was substituted for *agre*, 'first.'" (Monier Williams, *Indian Wisdom*, London, 1875, p. 259, *note.*) This change was probably made about the time of Alexander's invasion, and was therefore contemporaneous with the sect called Gymnosophists, who sacrificed their lives by fire. Before this corruption of the sacred text it was customary for Hindu wives to follow the dead bodies of

their husbands to the funeral pile, where they were commanded by the Rig-Veda to leave them and return to their domestic duties. "Rise, woman," were the words used, "come to the world of life; thou sleepest nigh unto him whose life is gone. Come to us. Thou hast thus fulfilled thy duties of a wife to the husband who once took thy hand and made thee a mother." (Max Müller, *Chips*, vol. ii, p. 32.)

When Lord William Bentinck arrived in India, in 1829, he found the practice of suttee common in the British possessions. Having satisfied himself that its suppression there was a matter of little difficulty and no great risk—for the Bengalese, who, of all the inhabitants of Southern India, were most given to it, were an apathetic and a spiritless race,—he, in concert with the Nizamat Adawalt, enacted and promulgated a regulation (*Reg.* xvii, 1829. See Wheeler, *Hist. India*, vol. iii, p. 273) declaring the burning or burying alive of widows illegal and punishable by the criminal courts. A similar enactment followed in Madras. The authorities at Bombay, from motives of State policy, contented themselves with merely rescinding a previous regulation (for which see Wheeler, *op. cit.*, vol. iii, p. 247, *foot-note*) which exempted from punishment those persons who had assisted at the celebration of the rite.

In the more or less independent States of India the rite was publicly recognized and in full force during some years after its suppression in the south. This was especially the case in the Rajpootan, the land of a warlike race who prided themselves on the self-devotion of their wives. The Prince of the Rajpoot Court of Kotah replied in the following words to the *chargé d'affaires*, who had hinted to him the pleasure with which the British

government would hear of the suppression of the rite in his dominion:—

"My friend, the customs alluded to have been handed down from the first fathers of mankind. They have obtained in every nation of India, and more especially in Rajpootana; for whenever a sovereign of these States has bidden farewell to life, the queens, through the yearnings of the inward spirit, have become suttees, notwithstanding that the relatives were averse to the sacrifice and would have prevented it altogether. It is not in the power of a mortal to nullify a divine though mysterious ordinance."

It was finally suppressed in these States, however, by the tact and skill of Major Ludlow, assisted by Macpherson and Campbell. (Ludlow, *Brit. India*, vol. ii, pp. 138, 149, 151.) The Major, who was *chargé d'affaires* at Judpore, persuaded the Council of Regency of that place to declare the practice of suttee a penal offence in principals and accessories alike. Within less than four months from this declaration two thirds of the independent States of India had followed the example of Judpore.

Following is a copy of the official return of suttee in India from 1815 to, and including, 1828:

DIVISIONS.	1815	1816	1817	1818	1819	1820	1821	1822	1823	1824	1825	1826	1827	1828
Calcutta . . .	253	289	442	544	421	370	372	328	340	373	398	324	337	308
Dacca . . .	31	24	52	58	55	51	52	45	40	40	101	65	49	47
Murshedabad . .	11	22	42	30	25	21	12	22	13	14	21	8	9	10
Patna . . .	20	29	49	57	40	62	69	70	49	42	47	65	55	55
Benares . . .	48	65	103	137	92	103	114	102	121	93	55	48	49	33
Bareilly . . .	15	13	19	13	17	20	15	16	12	10	17	8	18	10
	378	442	707	839	650	627	634	583	575	572	639	518	517	463

B

I.

Digest, L. xlviii, t. xxi, 1, 3, § 4. Si quis autem tædio vitæ, vel impatientia doloris alicujus, vel alio modo vitam finerit, successorem habere Divus Antoninus rescripsit.

II.

Ibid., § 5. Videri autem et patrem, qui sibi manus intulisset, quod diceretur filium suum occidisse, magis dolore filii amissi mortem sibi irrogasse; et ideo bona ejus non esse publicanda, D. Hadr. rescripsit.

III.

Ibid., L. xlviii, t. xxi, l. 3, under the title, De bonis eorum qui ante sententiam sibi mortem consciverunt: Qui rei postulati, vel qui in scelere deprehensi, metu criminis imminentis mortem sibi consciverunt, heredem non habent. See also *Ibid.*, L. xlix, t, xiv, l. 45, § 2.

IV.

Under the same title as above, § 1. Ut autem D. Pius rescripsit, ita demum bona ejus qui in reatu mortem sibi conscivit, fisco vindicanda sunt, si ejus criminis reus fuit, ut si damnaretur, morte aut deportatione ascisiendus esset.

V.

Under the same title, § 3. Ergo, ita demum dicendum est, bona ejus qui manus sibi intulit, fisco vindicari, si eo crimine nexus fuit, ut si convinceretur, bonis careat. This was not always enforced. Many suicides under the Empire escaped its operation, *c. g.*, Mamercus Scaurus and his wife Sextilia. Tacitus, *Ann.*, l. vi, c. 29; Martial, l. 1, *Epig.* 14.

VI.

Under the same title, § 2. Idem rescripsit, eum qui morti furti reus fuisset, licet vitam suspendio finierit: non videri in eadem causa esse, ut bona heredibus adimenda essent: sicut neque ipsi adimerentur, si compertum in eo furtum fuisset.

VII.

Ibid., L. xxiv, t. i, l. 32, § 7. Si maritus uxori donaverit et mortem sibi ob sceleris conscientiam consciverit, vel (etiam) post mortem memoria ejus damnata sit, revocabitur donatio: quamvis ea quæ aliis donaverit, valeant si non mortis causa donavit.

VIII.

Ibid., L. xv, t. i, l. 9, § 7. Si ipse servus sese vulneraverit, non debet hoc damnum deducere; non magis, quam si se occiderit, vel præcipitaverit: licet enim (etiam) servis naturaliter in suum sævire . . . . .

IX.

Ibid., L. xxi, t. i, l. 23, § 3. . . . Malus servus creditus est, qui aliquid facit, quo magis se rebus humanis extrahat: Utputa laqueum torsit, sive medicamentum pro veneno bibit, præcipitemve se exalto miserit, aliudve quid fecerit, quo facto speravit mortem perventuram: tanquam nonnihil in alium ausurus, qui hoc aversus se ausus est.

X.

Ibid., L. xlviii, t. xix, l. 36, § 12. L. xxviii, t. iv, l. 6, § 7. L. xlix, t. xvi, l. 6, § 7. This latter, a rescript of Hadrian, is comprehensive: Qui se vulneraverit, vel alias mortem sibi conscivit, Imperator Hadrianus rescripsit, ut modus ejus rei statutus sit, ut si impatientia doloris, aut tædio vitæ, aut morbo, aut furore, aut pudore mori ma-

luit : non animadvertatur in eum ; sed ignominia mittatur : si nihil tale prætendat, capite puniatur . . . . .

C

I.

Item placuit, ut hi qui sibi ipsis aut per ferrum, aut per venenum, aut per præcipitium, aut suspendium, vel quolibet modo violentiam inferunt mortem nulla pro illis in oblatione commemoratio fiat, neque cum psalmis ad sepulturam eorum cadavera deducantur : multi enim sibi hoc per ignorentiam usurpaverunt. Similiter et de his placuit, qui pro suis sceleribus puniuntur. *Concilium Bracarense* ii, *Capitula* xvi, *ap. Labb. Concil.*, t. vi, p. 522. Bourquelot, *op. cit.*, t. iii, iv. Lisle, *op. cit.*, p. 397.

II.

Sacri antiquorum patrum canones, de his qui sibi mortem voluntarie inferunt et qui pro suis sceleribus puniuntur, sancto inspirante spiritu, decreverunt, ut cum hymnis et psalmis eorum corpora non deferantur ad sepulturam. *Concil. Tricassin.* ii, *ap. Labb. Concil.*, t. xi, p. 313. Lisle, *op. cit.*, p. 398.

III.

Nicholai Papæ i, *Responsa ad Consult. Bulgar. ap. Labb. Concil. Om. Collectio*, t. ix, pp. 1564, 1565. *Art.* xcviii. *Title : De eo qui se ipsum occidit.* Si sit sepeliendus, qui se ipsum occidit, vel si sit pro eo sacrificium offerendum, requiritis. Sepeliendus est quidem, ne viventium odoratui molestiam ingerat : non tamen est, ut aliis pavor incutiatur, solito cum obsequiis more ad sepulchra ferendus. Sed et si qui sunt qui ejus sepulturæ studio humanitatis obsequuntur ; sibi non illi qui sui extitit homicidia, præstare videntur. Sacrificium vero pro eo non est offerendum,

qui non solum ad mortem usque peccavit, sed et mortis sibimet interitum propinavit. Quis enim magis peccatum (I *Joan.*, 5) ad mortem facit, pro quo Joannes apostolus dicit non orandum, quam is qui Judam imitatus sui ipsius homicidia fuisse magistro diabolo comprobatur.

IV.

Capitul. Carol. et Lud. imper. ccccIxii, l. vi, *ap. Baluz.*, t. i, p. 1,133, quoted in Lisle, *Du Suicide*, p. 401. De eo qui semet ipsum occidit, aut laqueo se suspendit, consideratum est ut, si quis compatiens velit eleemosynam dare, tribuat, et orationem in psalmodiis faciat. Oblationibus tamen et missis careant, quia incomprehensibilia sunt judicia Dei, et profunditatem consilii ejus nemo potest investigare.

V.

Capitul. ab heraldo. archiep. edita, cap. cxxxiv, *ap. Baluz.*, t. i, p. 1,295, quoted in Lisle, *op. cit.*, p. 402. De his qui sibi quacumque negligentiâ mortem inferunt, aut pro suis sceleribus puniuntur, nulla pro eis fiat oblatio, nec cum psalmis ad sepulturam ducantur.

VI.

"If any one kill himself by arms or other different methods by the instigation of the Devil, it is not lawful that Mass should be sung for such an one, or that his body should be committed to the ground with any psalmody."—Moore, *loc. cit.*, quoting from *Pœnitentiale D. Egberti Arch. Eboracensis* in Wilkins' *Council. Britan.*, vol. i, p. 129.

VII.

"It is neither lawful to celebrate Mass for the soul of one who by any diabolical instigation hath voluntarily committed murder on himself, nor to commit his body to

the ground with hymns and psalmody or any rites of honorable sepulture."—Moore, *loc. cit.*, quoting from *Canones dati sub Edgardo rege., can.* xv, in capite "De Modo Imponendi Pænitentiam." Lisle (*Du Suicide*, p. 403) quotes the same from Canciani, *Leg. Barbar.*, t. iv, p. 280. See also Wilkins' *Leges Anglo-Saxonicæ*, p. 90.

D

I.

Lisle, *op. cit.*, p. 404, *note.* "Coutume est en Bourgogne, se aucun se occist' et tue par désespérance, le sire, en quel justice il est trouvé, en doit faire justice aussi comme s'il avait tué un autre. La cause, car il est homicide de lui-même. Tous ses biens sont confiisqués au seigneur dessous qui ils sont."—Serpillon, *Code Criminel ou Commentaire sur l'Ordonance de* 1670, t. ii, tit. xxii, art. 1.

E

DEATHS AT DIFFERENT AGES RETURNED AS HAVING OCCURRED IN ENGLAND FROM SUICIDE IN THE SEVEN YEARS, 1858 TO 1864.

	MALES.											
	All ages	5	10	15	25	35	45	55	65	75	85	95 and upward.
1858 to 1864.	6,754	5	32	545	886	1,294	1,540	1,474	759	198	21	
	FEMALES.											
	2,462	1	19	435	373	428	532	374	222	66	12	

AVERAGE ANNUAL DEATHS OF MALES TO 1,000,000 LIVING AT EACH AGE.

1858 to 1864.	98.4		4.3	42.6	90.7	166.7	249.1	362.3	374.5	266.1	238.4	

AVERAGE ANNUAL DEATHS OF FEMALES TO 1,000,000 LIVING AT EACH AGE.

1858 to 1864.	34.1	.1	2.6	32.8	33.5	49.1	85.0	92.0	81.8	70.0	87.2	

F

CAUSES OF SUICIDE IN ITALY.

CAUSES OF SUICIDE.	NUMBER OF SUICIDES.							
	1876.			1877.			PER 1,000 SUICIDES, 1877.	
	TOTAL.	MALES.	FEMALES.	TOTAL.	MALES.	FEMALES.	MALES.	FEMALES.
Unhappiness	64	58	6	105	92	13	100.55	58.04
Loss of employment	7	7	. .	2	2	. .	2.19	. . .
Reverses of fortune	141	136	5	104	102	2	111.47	8.93
Domestic trouble	93	73	20	88	68	20	74.32	89.29
Hindered love	47	33	14	36	19	17	20.76	75.89
Disgust of military service	7	7	. .	8	8	. .	8.74	. . .
Disgust of life	26	23	3	28	27	1	29.51	4.46
Fear of condemnation	21	21	. .	24	24	. .	26.23	. . .
Jealousy	5	4	1	6	5	1	5.46	4.46
False point of honor	7	7	. .	11	11	. .	12.02	. . .
Ante-nuptial pregnancy	6	. .	6	4	. .	4	. .	17.86
Drunkenness	7	6	1	6	6	. .	6.56	. . .
Physical suffering	59	51	8	79	64	15	69.95	66.96
Cerebral fever	5	4	1	7	4	3	4.37	13.39
Insanity, delirium	127	89	38	136	95	41	103.83	183.04
Monomania	18	12	6	24	15	9	16.39	40 18
Pellagra	55	38	17	121	77	44	84.15	196.43
Idiocy, imbecility	8	7	1	12	9	3	9.84	13.39
Unknown	321	278	43	338	287	51	313.66	227.68
Total	1,024	854	170	1,139	915	224	1,000.00	1,000.00

H

The remarks of the *Dictionnaire des Sciences Philosophiques* (2me ed., Paris, 1875) on the prevention of suicide by education are so comprehensive that I have thought it advisable to translate them here.

"But how are we to reach suicide in its cause, that is, in the passions themselves which are its principle? By improving the great work of education. We should endeavor to develop not only intelligence but character, not only speculative ideas but convictions, and to support rational ideas and convictions by habits of order, industry, and regularity. We should cultivate the natural sentiments that attach to life, particularly the love of family. We should see to it that there is less of what is vague and monotonous in intellectual education. If, in addition to the general elements which lie at the root of all morality and culture, that kind of knowledge were imparted which is best suited to the faculties of each one, and to the career which he will probably follow, or which his family may select for him, there would be much less of that trouble from ambition without guide, agitation without aim, and hopes without foundation, which lies at the root of suicide or revolt. Lastly, we should pursue with all the force of reason and ridicule that furious, delirious, lewd literature, which, suggesting sensual thoughts while lulling the mind to revery, enervates and perverts morals, defies all law, insults every honest affection, every legitimate ambition, and ends in egoism and a pursuit of the unattainable."

SUICIDE AND SOCIAL CONDITION IN THE UNITED STATES, CENSUS OF 1870.

STATE.	NO. OF SUICIDES.	POPULATION.	PERCENT. OF SUICIDES TO 100,000 POP.	PERCENTAGE OF ILLITERACY IN 100,000 POP.	POPULATION TO THE SQUARE MILE.	PREVAILING INDUSTRY.	PREVAILING RELIGIOUS BELIEF.	CHURCH ACCOMMODATION.	PERCENT. OF INSAN'Y IN 100,000 POPUL'T'N
Alabama	8	996,992	.802	73.499	19.66	Agriculture	Method. and Bapt.	Good	55.7
Arkansas	4	484,471	.825	50.493	9.30	"	" "	"	33.3
California	84	582,031	14.432	9.723	2.29	Mining & Agri.	" and Catholic	Very deficient	196.9
Delaware	3	125,015	2.309	33.061	58.97	Manufacturing	Congregational	Good	143.5
Florida	7	188,248	3.718	73 329	3 17	Agriculture	Methodist	"	52.0
Georgia	14	1,184,109	1.182	74.921	20.42	"	"	Very deficient	15.3
Illinois	106	2,539,891	4.173	8 659	45.84	"	Method. and Bapt.	Good	53.5
Indiana	43	1,680,637	3.154	12 124	40 71	"	Methodist	Deficient	64.0
Iowa	30	1,194,320	3.100	5 843	21.69	"	"	Good	89.4
Kansas	15	373,299	4.002	10.961	4.48	"	"	Deficient	62.1
Kentucky	23	1,321,011	1.741	44.038	35.33	"	Meth. and Presbyter.	Very deficient	35.0
Louisiana	15	726,915	2.063	73.376	17.58	"	Method. and Bapt.	Good	94.2
Maine	29	626,915	4.625	5.100	17.91	"	Cath. Method. Bapt.	Very deficient	62.0
Maryland	13	780,894	1.605	31.963	70 20	Man'f'g & Agri.	Congr. " "	Good	126.4
Massachusetts	105	1,457,351	7.200	11.849	186.84	" "	Methodist	"	94.9
Michigan	33	1,187 234	2 780	7.330	20.71	" "	Congregational	"	182 6
Minnesota	7	440,056	1.569	8.329	5.26	Agriculture	Methodist	Very deficient	69.0
Mississippi	12	827,922	1.448	73.078	17.56	"	Catholic	" "	69.7
Missouri	54	1,721,295	3.137	21.442	26.34	"	Method. and Bapt.	Good	29.5
Nebraska	8	129,322	6.186	5.618	1.62	"	Cath. Method. Bapt.	Very deficient	73 4
Nevada	5	48,711	8,516	3.283	0.41	Mining	" " "	" "	21.6
New Hampshire	25	318,300	7 854	5 512	34.30	Man'f'g & Agri.	Cath Method. Bapt.	" "	3 4
New Jersey	21	906,096	2.300	10.114	108 91	Manufacturing	Method. and Bapt.	Good	172.1
New York	234	4,387,464	5.333	9 2 3	93.25	" & Commerce	Method. and Presby.	"	101.4
North Carolina	10	1,071,361	.933	68.836	21.13	Agriculture	Methodist	Deficient	145.0
Ohio	96	2,665,260	3.600	9.976	66.69	"	Méthod. and Bapt.	Good	72.7
Oregon	4	101,883	3.925	6.906	0.95	"	Methodist	"	128.0
Pennsylvania	125	3,522,050	3.549	10.053	76.56	Manufacturing	Methodist	Deficient	120.0
Rhode Island	6	217,353	2.760	17.178	166.43	"	Various dissenting	Good	111.0
South Carolina	5	705,606	.708	70.834	20.75	Agriculture	Baptist	"	143.0
Tennessee	19	1,258,520	1.517	52.065	27.60	"	Method. and Bapt.	"	47.1
Texas	28	818,899	3.418	50.204	2.98	"	Method. Bapt. Pres.	"	73.5
Vermont	25	330,551	7 563	9 951	32.37	"	Method. Bapt.	Very deficient	33.0
Virginia	16	1,225,163	1.360	68.301	31.95	"	Cong. Method. Bapt.	Good	218.1
West Virginia	11	442,014	2.500	29.477	19.22	"	Method. Bapt.	"	91.8
Wisconsin	26	1,064,985	2.430	8.495	19.56	"	" "	"	84.6
							Catholic, Methodist	Very deficient	79.4

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